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May 8, 1987

COMMONWEAL

WHAT'S AT STAKE IN CENTRAL AMERICA?

Abraham F. Lowenthal

St. Charles Seminary Library
Cathagena, Ohio

BRAZILIAN LAND GRAB

Arthur Powers

EL SALVADOR: THE NEW FACE OF WAR

Peter Shiras

JIMMY SWAGGART Y DIOS

Patrick Lacefield

HAITI'S 'YES' FOR DEMOCRACY

Lance Compa

Special
Advertising
Supplement

NEW
RELIGIONS

FROM
UNIVERSITY
PRESSES

CORRESPONDENCE

Damage control

New Haven, Conn.

To the Editors: Having had some experience in these matters, I know that an author's reply to a negative review can never undo the damage. I have no intention of trying to correct Mr. Baumann's errors of fact ["Leaving the Hound at Bay," February 13], his flagrant misreadings, and his supercilious attitude to a book whose substance cost me much to create. But I would like to tell the readers of *Commonweal*, a magazine for which I wrote and for which I have much affection, that I'm confident many of them, should they read *Faith, Sex, Mystery*, will see a very different book from the one Baumann described. They may not like it, but they'll have read the real book.

RICHARD GILMAN

Woody's canonization

Barstow, Calif.

To the Editors: I haven't seen Woody Allen's *Radio Days* but after Tom O'Brien's review [February 27] I'm satisfied that it "reveals everything that's wrong with Woody Allen even when he makes good movies." All the marks are there. "Not enough plot to sustain a single genuine role." "Heavy dose of Allen's usual narcissism." "Painfully superficial." "A cliché to begin with." "Mostly consists of 'meanwhile.'" "The little asteroid of Manhattan." I'm talking about *Hannah and Her Sisters*. But I don't agree that Allen has gifts of irony and mock heroism. To me they are "metaphorical links of the slimmest kind."

Half of our select little movie-going clique are party to Woody's canonization, and the aforementioned high culture enthusiasm. The other half find him trivial, pretentious, and even boring. The celebration of his sperm count in *Hannah*

and *Her Sisters* was not for everybody; for some it was ridiculous, even somewhat disgusting. Who cares if Woody Allen has reached majority?

RUSS COLE

Editors' note: For another view of *Hannah and Her Sisters*, see page 294.

Plunged into crisis

Cambridge, Mass.

To the Editors: Joseph A. Komonchak's article ["Issues Behind the Curran Case," January 30] is certainly the most lucid, short exposition of the problems I have seen. Unlike poor Mr. Hale ["Where He Started & Where He Stands," January 30] who still seems to think that the problem centers on Curran's views on sexual ethics, Komonchak realizes that we are dealing with a crisis into which Catholic Christianity has been plunged by those who would reduce the church to a mere Roman sect.

However, I do think that there are many of us who would appreciate some guidance from you and others as to what we can do to keep the church Christian and Catholic. Surely there must be some way in which we can make our voices heard. But what are the most effective channels?

NICHOLAS R. CLIFFORD

Sticky moral mortar

Princeton, N.J.

To the Editors: Joseph Komonchak's explication of the Ratzinger vs. Curran case produces a disarming intellectual malaise. Everything seems inevitable, determined by circumstances. First we had a fortress church, separate, in-bred, intellectually suspect. Then Vatican II knocked down the walls but neglected to supply a new master plan. So erstwhile theologians like Curran attempted to fill the pastoral void by offering mediating guidance. Representative Ratzinger, speaking for the damaged fortress church, declares Curranoids non-

persons, rewrites the history of Vatican II, and proclaims that the fortress will be rebuilt. Since opposition has been summarily neutralized, we can all assume a spectator's posture as the church re-walls itself in, with even less intellectual and moral mortar than ever before.

As Catholic Christians, is this our dismal future? If so, it is also the bleak landscape of many generations of our descendants, if we are to judge by the longevity of the prior period of ecclesial fortification.

Komonchak offers us little hope but concludes with a suggestion with roots to Bernard Lonergan: before we proceed further, we need a whole new set of critical foundations, as St. Thomas himself would surely conclude if he were struggling with us.

Should our best minds now be looking to Thomas, or do we need a more fundamental and immediate response to those who would wall off our religion?

J. BURT TOTARO

Komonchak's clarity

Newton Centre, Mass.

To the Editors: With accustomed clarity and balance Joseph Komonchak has provided something of a guide for the perplexed in these stormy times. His past
(Continued on page 300)

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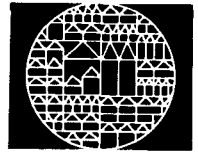
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COMMONWEAL



Is deterrence moral?

The question is more pressing than ever. In the months since Reykjavik, Mr. Gorbachev has been pelting the West with proposals for getting rid of nuclear arms. So far, the West has been capable of responding with little more than, "Yes, but. . . . Yes, but. . . ." even to the zero-option proposal of its own devising. Eventually, one hopes, embarrassment will concentrate the collective mind of Washington and NATO. Does the West really want a Europe free of intermediate-range missiles, as it said seven years ago? Does the West really want to get rid of the threat of Warsaw Pact short-range missiles, as it said only a few weeks ago? Does the West really want Europe denuclearized altogether, as various peace movements have been vigorously urging and most European leaders vigorously denying? Does the West really want to do away with all ballistic missiles—or even all nuclear weapons—as Gorbachev and Reagan grandiosely proposed at Reykjavik?

These should not be rhetorical questions, meant only to taunt Western leaders for their apparent timidity. There are good reasons why some veteran arms-control advocates who were once aghast at the Reagan administration's unreceptive stance toward East-West arms negotiations are now rubbing their eyes and shaking their heads at the same administration's sudden lurches toward sweeping reductions in nuclear weapons. Would a *totally* denuclearized Europe make the outbreak of conventional war there more or less likely? If the answer is more likely, then ultimately won't nuclear war between the superpowers be rendered more likely as well? In Mr. Gorbachev's world of the year 2000 where nuclear weapons have been reduced to zero, the nation that cheated would pose a tremendous threat. That is why Robert McNamara, even while he affirms the desirability of a nuclear-free world, points out that it would require a virtually perfect method of detecting any building of nuclear weapons "by any nation or terrorist group." Otherwise, "an agreement for total nuclear disarmament will almost certainly degenerate into an unstable rearmament race."

To raise problems like these is not to defend the status quo of fifty thousand nuclear weapons as anything resembling a rational system of "peacekeeping." Quite the contrary. No one should dismiss the present opportunities on the grounds, say, that Mr. Gorbachev is only pursuing Soviet interests. Of course he is. An agreement serving Soviet interests will be a lot more solid than one based on some unlikely outburst of Kremlin benevolence. The question is whether Soviet interests can be made to coincide in this area with the interests of the West and the interests of peace and human survival. And thinking this through obviously requires clarity in the U.S. and Europe about basic objectives. Political leaders are being forced back to an old truth: getting rid of nuclear weapons is not exactly the same thing as getting rid of nuclear war. It's no good reducing the superpowers' capacity to destroy

civilization from five times over to two times over if, in the process, the likelihood of such a catastrophe is actually increased.

Faced with a moment like the present, we are forced back to basics in moral as well as strategic terms. Four years ago, for example, the Catholic bishops declared a "strictly conditioned moral acceptance of nuclear deterrence." Yet it is not unfair to say that in many of the circles where the bishops' nuclear pastoral has been most warmly welcomed and actively promoted there is more tolerance than enthusiasm for both the letter's reaffirmation of just-war doctrine and for the bishops' acceptance of deterrence. Indeed, when *Commonweal* recently published an article characterizing the bishops' (and the pope's) acceptance of deterrence as a blank check, a soft pitch to the military-industrial complex, and "a bleak day for the Gospel," reader response was almost unanimously favorable.

Why is this issue posed more emphatically today? Precisely because the flurry of arms talks between East and West, following upon the ambiguities in the Reagan Star Wars initiative, has raised the question of whether we should be pursuing arms control on the basis of strengthening deterrence or simply dismantling it. Not only that. The visions of a nuclear-free world entertained by the two protagonists at Reykjavik actually served to remind many people of how problematic such notions really are. Between the very plausible goal of deep cuts in nuclear arms and the grander goal of abolishing such arms entirely, whether by treaty or strategic defenses, the leap is enormous. Given an ideologically divided and distrustful world, and the fact that the knowledge needed to recreate nuclear weaponry will not disappear, reliance on deterrence of some sort or another looks less like a temporary resort on the way to total nuclear disarmament than a semi-permanent fact of life. Even a world government with peacekeeping powers might have to maintain some kind of deterrent. But should we then be striving, in our arms reduction efforts, to shape a moral nuclear deterrent? Or should we agree with those who believe such a thing is a contradiction in terms at best, a blasphemy at worst?

It is not hard to make a strong case against the morality of nuclear deterrence. For some, that case is only an extension of the incompatibility they see between the Gospel and *any* use of violent force. But many others who don't consider themselves pacifists equally reject any use of nuclear weapons on the grounds that they immediately perpetrate death and destruction on an indiscriminate and disproportionate scale—or they threaten almost inevitably such death and destruction through escalation. Deterrence, they would allow, is not use; indeed, it is justified as a means of forestalling use. But deterrence, should it fail, involves a future risk of unjustifiable deeds; and indeed, if it is not to fail, it requires an immediate readiness to commit the horrendous acts that effectively deter.

That is the moral argument, but opposition to deterrence is both more and less than an argument. It is a deep-seated recoiling from all the calculations of threat and anticipated destruction on a vast scale that deterrence theory ultimately entails. It is an almost visceral conviction that this sort of

thinking can only be corrupting and ungodly, can only undermine peace, even "peace of a sort," rather than assure it.

The logical conclusion of an anti-deterrent posture is unilateral nuclear disarmament. And the logical conclusion of that is probably a rejection of any armed resistance (except possibly guerrilla warfare) against a determined nuclear power. If deterrence is immoral, then nuclear arms will become the monopoly of immoral nations. These are not very palatable conclusions for the average citizen, and only the boldest American opponents of deterrence are apt to follow this logic to its end. Most find ample scope for their overall rejection of deterrence in active opposition to particular excesses of U.S. military policy, of which there are plenty.

What, then, is the bishops' alternative? No one, of course, and certainly not the bishops themselves, would claim that their argument concerning deterrence is without considerable ambiguities. It leans heavily on a papal pronouncement and does a better job of yoking together certain reasonable conclusions than of supplying a coherent moral rationale to justify them. One result has been the widespread belief that the bishops advocate a species of "bluff deterrent": that they condemn all possible *uses* of nuclear weapons as immoral but nonetheless allow the state to maintain a nuclear *threat*, which our leaders are under moral obligation never actually to carry out. It is reasonably objected that such a deterrent not only implicates the military and the citizenry (who are presumably unaware or uncertain of their leaders' ultimate determination never to use these weapons) in the intention to carry out vastly immoral actions, but it also stands doubly condemned for being so transparent a bluff as in fact to increase the danger of nuclear war. A close reading of the pastoral and the debates that shaped it would show that this interpretation is inaccurate. Nonetheless grounds for it can be easily found in the text, as well as in other episcopal statements. And, most significantly, the bishops themselves have done little to clarify the matter.

If the bishops have avoided resolving this ambiguity, that may reflect a reluctance to exacerbate differences within their own ranks or alienate the constituency that has, in many respects, been the most devoted to the pastoral's message. It also reflects sensitivity to the danger of reinforcing popular complacency about the nuclear status quo or lending support to the marketing of ominous or wasteful new weapons systems in the name of deterrence. It is a healthy thing when bishops shy away from appearing to bless weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction.

Nonetheless, the moral case for nuclear deterrence needs to be voiced. The bishops were right to express "profound skepticism" about the moral acceptability of any use of nuclear weapons; that put the burden of proof where it belongs. But they were also right in refusing — as the record of their debate shows — to rule out all use definitively, in particular retaliatory strikes against military and economic, not primarily civilian, targets that would not involve disproportionate non-combatant deaths. Do such targets actually exist? Does the word "proportionate" retain any meaning in the case of nuclear strikes? Is escalation so inevitable that all restraint would

be lost? These are "empirical" questions — concerning facts that, if deterrence serves its purpose, can never be ascertained with certainty. But the first question is whether, always within the severe limits of our knowledge, we will explore these questions at all. Should we be comparing targets; sizing up the historical and psychological evidence concerning escalation in war; asking ourselves what level of "incidental" casualties have been accepted as legitimate in wars that, with hindsight, we might consider just? Dare Christians even enter this kind of moral discussion?

Most opponents of deterrence instinctively say "no." We say "yes." And we say that the evidence concerning targets, casualties, and escalation is at least mixed enough that the search for a moral deterrent is not doomed to self-contradiction but is, on the contrary, morally preferable to the immediate and complete rejection of nuclear deterrence.

We say all this with fear and trembling. Any truck with nuclear war — even maintaining the potential of waging it precisely to prevent it from ever occurring — risks asserting an arrogant degree of control over our destiny that some would say belongs only to God. What are the limits of human responsibility for the world, what is the point beyond which we must leave everything to God's sovereignty rather than be complicit in profound evil?

But we believe that *any* position on nuclear deterrence must be held with fear and trembling. The stakes are enormous. They include not only the preservation of freedoms and institutions of enormous significance, but also the prevention of continental holocaust itself. Unilateralism is often said to risk the former. More to the point, should it ever begin to be widely accepted, unilateralism would create instabilities making nuclear war more, not less, likely. That, too, is a tremendous challenge to any conscience.

The search for a moral nuclear deterrent is not equivalent to the acceptance of *any* deterrent. The demand to reduce the wasteful, dangerous mountain of weapons; the opposition to new, destabilizing systems; the insistence on a political component that would complement the military dimension of East-West relations — all this is implied in the idea of an acceptable deterrent. Those who refuse to reject deterrence in principle face no small task. Starting, for example, with Star Wars. . . .

MIGHTIER THAN THE SDI

In March 1983 President Reagan's "Star Wars" speech hit the unsuspecting world like the primordial big bang. It set in motion what promised to be an exotic, ever-expanding development of space-based strategic defenses. Military contractors were ecstatic; opponents of arms control jubilant; and policy makers beaming, if somewhat fuzzy on the details. Last month, however, a second bang was registered, the explosive report issued by the American Physical Society questioning

the feasibility of Star Wars defenses anytime this century (if ever). In terms of space and time, this latter shot deserves to be heard loudly around the world. The best defense against Star Wars, it seems, is nothing other than rigorous scientific research.

The APS report — which was eighteen months in preparation — is the most authoritative technical analysis of the Strategic Defense Initiative to date. It was authorized by the most eminent board of physical scientists this country has. Many are employed at the government's own prestigious laboratories, and we hope they will continue to be. Whereas previous objections to SDI emanated from engineering skeptics, political and financial naysayers, and ideological opponents, the stark challenge of the APS report is that its negative assessment comes from an independent scientific body concerned solely with the physical facts. It may thus ground the Star Wars dream before it has literally gotten off the ground.

The report does not do this immediately, but it says ten years of research are needed to know whether SDI stands a chance of ever flying, a question the administration seems to have simply waved. When it comes to reality, the report makes it clear, you've got to start with at least a minimum of the right physics. The report is thus the pre-emptive strike proponents of SDI feared most. A lame duck may be agile by comparison.

The 424-page report contained other revelations as well. The space-based platforms envisioned by SDI, for example, will require nuclear reactors. The president has continued to boast of SDI as non-nuclear. Was he not informed? The report states it is highly questionable whether a space defense could defend itself from enemy attack. Finally, Soviet countermeasures could probably overwhelm and neutralize space defenses more efficiently and cheaply than an SDI could be deployed. While these criticisms of SDI are clearly not novel, it will be much harder for the administration to write them off in the future.

Still, there will continue to be tremendous pressure from the right and from military contractors to proceed with SDI. In the private sector alone there are 331 separate business firms which have received SDI contracts. One example is the Space Division of the Grumman Corporation. Already SDI accounts for half its revenue, and the project is simply in the research phase. We can expect counterattacks on the APS report; the Pentagon was the first to fire. But the APS report is in an orbit its critics will find difficult to touch.

If everything that rises must converge, the serendipitous aspect of the APS report is that it dovetails with proposals made last year at Reykjavik (but later abandoned) by the administration which would have maintained the deployment strictures of the 1972 ABM Treaty for the next ten years. The administration should now return to that offer, in keeping with the traditional reading of the treaty as recently reaffirmed in congressional hearings. At a time when tangible breakthroughs are possible in arms control and reduction, such a posture would allow the administration to save face and appear creative at the same time.

It may not be one of the well-known laws of ther-

modynamics, but when it comes to Star Wars the axiom applies: "The greater the illusion, the larger the crash." The APS has unmasked the illusion. It may help spare the world one too many big bangs.

REPORT FROM HAITI

A 'YES' FOR DEMOCRACY CONSTITUTIONAL PLEBISCITE

“I voted ‘Yes’ for them, not for me,” declared a white-haired man emerging from a voting station in Haiti’s constitutional referendum in late March. He pointed at knots of children watching their parents line up to vote. “The dictators stole the best years of my life,” he said, tears welling in his eyes. “This constitution can save our young people from the same fate.”

According to official vote tallies released April 12, more than 99 percent of that man’s compatriots who voted in the March 29 plebiscite felt the same way about Haiti’s new charter and its repudiation of thirty years of Duvalierist rule. Visiting thirty polling stations in different parts of the country, a private delegation of U.S. observers saw thousands of Haitians openly, joyfully stuffing white “Yes” votes into ballot boxes and tearing up the yellow “No” ballots.

One woman chewed up the “No” ballot and swallowed it: “That’s for the Duvaliers and the *Macoutes*,” she proclaimed, referring to the paramilitary thugs who sustained the tyranny launched by “Papa Doc” François Duvalier in 1957. The new constitution curbs a president’s power, breaks off the police from military command, and bars from political office for ten years officials of the Duvalierist dictatorship and members of the *Tonton Macoutes*.

Nearly 45 percent of Haiti’s adults went to the polls, an astonishing turnout in a country with 80 percent illiteracy and crushing poverty. Asked to explain the response, a young

organizer in Gonaïves, the port city where students sparked the movement that ended in the flight of Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier in February 1986, told us: “The people took over the process — organizing, educating, mobilizing for a genuine people’s vote. It was the opposite of last year’s failed election.”

She was talking about the vote for a constituent assembly last October. Then the interim Council of National Government (CNG), still dominated by army men, made little effort to inform the public about the issues or mechanics of the vote. Fewer than 5 percent of the voters appeared for that election.

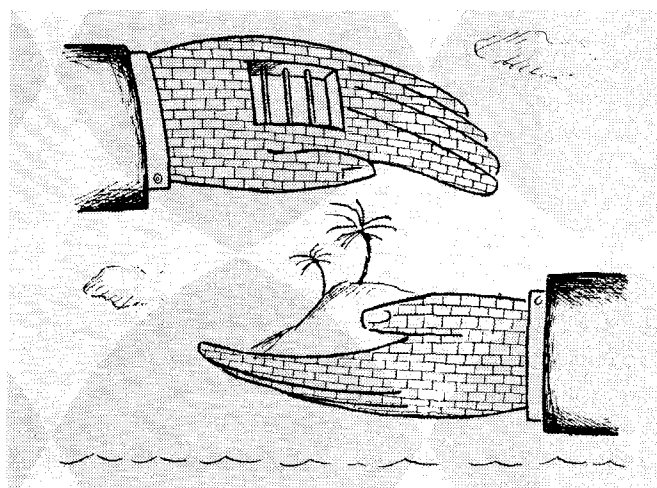
Despite this shaky mandate, the constituent assembly drafted a genuinely liberal constitution. While many groups complained of specific provisions (students and professors, for example, argued that the clause prohibiting military intervention in schools’ academic functions left open the possibility of action against campus-based political involvement), most elements of the movement that forced Duvalier’s flight concluded that the new charter deserved support for its guarantees of civil liberties, checks and balances, and the important ten-year ban on officials of the old regime running for political office.

Just as important as the constitution itself, though, carrying out a successful referendum was indispensable to the survival of the democratic movement. Another low turnout would let the CNG discount the validity of the plebiscite in any future move to seize power. A chaotic vote marked by intimidation, fraud, or the feared provocations by holdover Duvalierists might give the army just the excuse it needed to cut short the democratic experiment and hold on to power. Going forward or going under: this was the choice for those seeking change in Haiti.

Vocal demands forced the government to issue a version of the constitution in Creole, the language of the Haitian masses. Newspapers, magazines, the two national television networks, and church-run radio stations began non-stop readings, commentary, and debates on the new charter. Trade unions, youth groups, social service agencies, human rights organizations, even conservative Protestant churches that normally steer clear of politics turned their meetings and ceremonies into seminars on the draft constitution. The air was suspenseful on the eve of the vote. Could this movement toward democracy in Haiti win the constitution through a “people’s vote,” organized and conducted by the citizenry instead of a reluctant government?

Our observer team watched it happen. Thousands of volunteers came forward to set up, staff, and observe the polling stations. Voters swelled to the polls with pride, dignity, and discipline. This was not a people beaten down by thirty years of Duvalierist dictatorship and *macoutiste* terrorism; on the contrary, we saw a people resolute in their desire for democratic rights.

As it has throughout the course of the new democratic movement in Haiti, the Catholic church had a key part in the referendum process. We met with Pere Yvon Joseph on the eve of the vote in the northern coast city of Cap-Haïtien, where he directs the church’s *Misyon Alfa* (Alpha Mission), the literacy



program aimed at teaching adult citizens to read and write. All his work in the weeks leading up to the referendum was devoted to preparing for the vote, with wide-ranging discussions about *konstitisyon*, Haitian Creole for constitution.

The young activists in Gonaives who told us how they got out the vote in their city expressed criticism for what they saw as ambivalence on the part of the church. While *Radio Soleil*, the church's island-wide radio station, combined civics lessons on the new charter with advocacy for a "Yes" vote, the bishops' conference simply urged the faithful to vote without suggesting a preference. The Gonaives organizers took this as evidence of continued Duvalierist influence among conservative clergy.

Bishop Emmanuel Constant of Gonaives, the moderate, former chairman of the Haitian bishops' conference, explained that the difference reflected divergent roles of the radio station, on one hand, and the bishops' body on the other. He said the church is firm in its support for continued progress toward full democracy in Haiti, attributing contrary suspicions to youthful impatience.

So far, United States policy in Haiti has been skillfully applied, though many activists told us they are waiting for the American honeymoon with Haitian democracy to end. The U.S. eased Baby Doc's flight last year, providing the transport plane, *à la* Marcos, to ship him and his family to France. Since then U.S. economic aid has almost doubled. But it hardly dents the country's seemingly intractable poverty. With Haiti's history of social struggle and a sizable wealthy class that will not readily sacrifice for the country, more tensions are likely to arise in the months and years ahead.

It is too soon to conclude that Haiti's move toward democracy is irreversible. Duvalierists are still lodged in the military and in CNG ministries. A week before the referendum Colonel William Regala, one of the three members of the CNG, was promoted to Brigadier General, bypassing two senior officers in line for the post. He immediately reshuffled his officers to

place loyalists in key assignments, making Regala the undisputed strong man in the CNG and in the army.

Three days before the referendum the U.S. State Department certified Haiti's progress on human rights despite several unsolved murders, beatings, and "disappearances" under the post-Duvalier CNG. The action freed \$4.8 million in non-lethal military aid to the CNG. Most Haitian democrats had argued against the aid, asking the U.S. to wait until the installation of an elected civilian government in early 1988 before helping the Haitian military. (There will be state and local elections this July, and the election of a civilian president and a national legislature is set for November 1987). They see the premature aid as a signal to General Regala that he can count on U.S. support if he moves to take power on a claim of "chaos" in the country.

The Haitian people showed a remarkable capacity for democratic action in their 1987 constitutional referendum. Can the United States display a similar capacity for tolerance if Haitian democracy takes a turn not to its liking? Nationalist, anti-American rhetoric is already commonplace; after all, the U.S. did little to disturb thirty years of Duvalierist rule.

"In two years Haiti will have another military dictatorship," one well-placed European observer told us. "These people don't know how to handle democracy." Many Haitians echoed this fear in private discussions before the plebiscite. "We have to change the political culture of the people and the mentality of the army before it's too late," went the refrain.

The constitutional referendum showed that the Haitian people are ready for change. If the army is not, another showdown between Haiti's fledgling democracy and longstanding tyranny is inevitable. Where will the United States government stand then?

LANCE COMPA

Lance Compa is Washington representative of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE). He was a member of a delegation of independent observers to the Haitian constitutional referendum.

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

GOD'S RIGHT HAND

THE JUDGE & THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Viewed constitutionally, Judge W. Brevard Hand's decision that "secular humanism" is a religion is no doubt an absurdity — as virtually every constitutional authority who has ventured to comment on the decision has declared.

But viewed sociologically, the judge may be close to having an interesting point.

Hand, chief judge of the U.S. district court that sits in Mobile, Alabama, rendered his decision in early March. Secular humanism being a religion, he said, it is subject to both the protections and the

limitations of the First Amendment. Among the limitations, of course, is that it cannot be promoted in public schools, just as Catholicism, Methodism, Judaism, etc., cannot be promoted. But certain textbooks used in the Alabama public schools do in fact, Judge Hand found, promote secular humanism. Therefore, these textbooks — forty-four in all, although he amended his ruling to allow four home economics texts to be used if they deleted certain unapproved portions — would have to be removed from the classrooms of the state.

It is customary to snicker at the folks who contend that there exists such a thing as the religion of secular humanism. After all, aren't these the same people

who reject all theories of biological evolution, preferring instead, with a truly wonderful degree of scriptural illiteracy, to read the opening of Genesis as though it were a textbook in natural science? Secular humanism is the hobgoblin of the crackpot right wing of American Protestantism, is it not?

Before proceeding, I want to assure the reader that my snickering credentials are in good order. I am shocked neither by Darwin nor by the National Council of Churches. My car carries no bumper stickers that say "Pat Robertson for President" or "In case of rapture, this car will return to Tokyo without its driver." And if I had my choice between turning the country over to the secular humanists or turning it over to the sorts who get exercised about secular humanism, I'd choose the former.

But I'm puzzled by the people who respond to the religion-of-secular-humanism thesis by pretending that the thesis is utterly preposterous and that those who subscribe to it are laughable bumpkins — and are such not simply as a matter of empirical fact but as a matter of psychological necessity.

This reaction reminds me of people who deny the existence of the Mafia. I don't mind those who critique the popular conception of the Mafia: who say, for instance, that it should be called La Cosa Nostra, not the Mafia; or that the organization isn't quite as tight and disciplined as it is sometimes represented in movies; or that there is a great deal of organized crime in America that has little or no

connection with the "families." That's fine. But how anyone, at this late date in the world's history, can honestly deny the existence of the thing is beyond me.

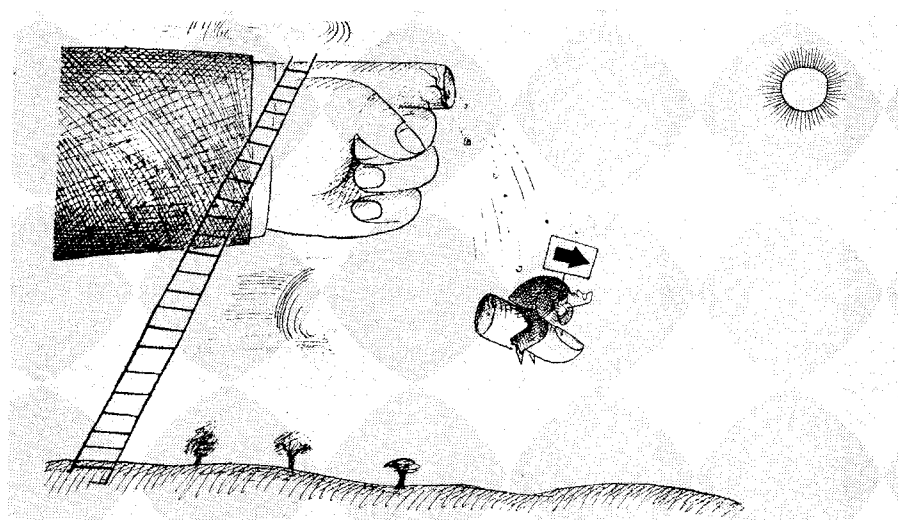
Likewise I find it hard to understand how anyone can honestly deny the existence of the cultural phenomenon pointed at by the title: religion of secular humanism. You can argue that it is wrongly named; that it is not a single thing but many things, which bear at most a family resemblance to one another; that it should not be called a religion but instead a philosophy or a worldview; that this or that cited instance of it (for example, the Alabama textbooks) are not really instances of it at all; etc. But how can anyone deny its existence?

Secular humanism is nothing other than a contemporary descendant (though not the only contemporary descendant) of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was, of course, a very mixed bag, but in its most celebrated representatives it tended to be decidedly anti-Christian — even though these representatives observed a stylistic etiquette which obliged them to profess Christianity ("our holy religion," as David Hume, that exquisite ironist, liked to call it) at the very moment they were attacking it. The anti-Christian flavor of the Enlightenment was weaker, to be sure, in the English-speaking countries than on the European continent; but it wasn't absent even in the former, as names like Hume and Edward Gibbon and Tom Paine testify.

Is the Enlightenment still alive in America today? Of course it is, as we shall constantly be reminded during the next two or three years while commemorating that magnificent fruit of the Enlightenment, the United States Constitution. And if the Enlightenment tradition is still alive and well in America, then it should come as no surprise to discover that some of the anti-Christian elements of that tradition are also alive and well. It takes no bumpkin prone to seeing bogeymen to realize this; a passing knowledge of the cultural history of the last three centuries will do just as well.

On second thought, I retract what I said above: I really can understand how secular humanists might remain unaware of the existence of their faith. The faith of the Enlightenment, after all, was a faith that believed it had transcended the need for faith. The articles of its creed it did not see as articles of a creed; it saw them instead as propositions of science and scientific philosophy. Even the deistic wing of the Enlightenment regarded its affirmation of the existence of God not as an act of faith but as an act of knowledge. To inform such believers that they really are believers, not pure knowers, would be to hurl accusations at them that they would regard as simply ridiculous. Likewise, contemporary secular humanists are unlikely to be persuaded that they are anything other than severely rational in spirit when we point out to them that their materialistic metaphysic, their sentimental and relativistic ethic, and their scientific epistemology are all acts of faith.

None of this, I hasten to add, is intended as an endorsement of Judge Hand's odd decision; or as a round of applause for right-wing Protestantism; or even as a censure of secular humanism. And certainly none of it is intended as a denunciation of the Enlightenment, which I, like all reasonable persons, regard as one of history's great moments of human progress and liberation. It is simply an expression of wonder at the fact that certain latter-day children of Voltaire and Diderot can fail to see what is obvious to the most uncultured of Bible-thumping yahoos.



PARTNERS IN CONFLICT

THE U.S. & THE CARIBBEAN BASIN

ABRAHAM F. LOWENTHAL

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, U.S. troops landed more than twenty times in Caribbean Basin countries: in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. In several of these countries, U.S. troops remained for years. In many cases, the United States became a predominant actor in local politics. It made and unmade governments, organized elections, trained military units, and fought against insurrectionary movements that were allegedly being aided from abroad.

Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy and the U.S. commitment, formalized in 1934, to eschew unilateral military intervention, ended this chapter in the diplomatic history of the United States. For the next generation, the Caribbean Basin countries no longer received priority in U.S. foreign policy; the United States concentrated on its interests elsewhere.

Beginning with the Carter administration, however, and with greater attention during the Reagan period, official Washington has rediscovered the Caribbean Basin.

● Economic and military assistance from the United States to the countries of the Caribbean and Central America has multiplied more than tenfold since 1977, even while overall foreign aid figures have been declining. Except for Israel and Egypt, the countries of the Caribbean Basin receive the largest amount of U.S. assistance worldwide. El Salvador alone receives the fourth-highest amount of U.S. foreign aid.

● In January 1984, the Kissinger report proposed sending

\$8 billion in U.S. economic assistance to the region during the ensuing five years, as well as the creation of a new Central American Development Organization, with the United States at its center. The report also suggested making trade concessions, increasing military assistance, offering ten thousand scholarships, establishing a Literacy Corps for Central America, and many other forms of U.S. engagement. Coming on the heels of the Reagan administration's Caribbean Basin Initiative, the recommendations of the Kissinger commission amounted to a brief for intensifying the U.S. government's focus on the border region to an extent unprecedented since the 1920s.

● In addition to the operation in Grenada, the Reagan administration has repeatedly undertaken extended military and naval exercises, involving several thousand U.S. troops each time, in Honduras and off the coasts of Nicaragua. It has also built new military bases and airfields in Honduras and has pre-positioned thousands of tons of matériel. The Reagan administration has engaged the United States in a prolonged and hardly covert, albeit indirect, war against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, overwhelming, or evading congressional resistance to U.S. military involvement, and there is

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good reason to believe that the United States government has prepared itself for eventual direct military intervention.

Neglected by Washington for so many years, the Caribbean Basin countries are today receiving lavish attention from the United States. But while official discussions of U.S. policy in the Caribbean Basin are laced with assertions of a vital U.S. "national security interest" in the region, the exact nature of the interest is rarely specified. The 1984 report of the national Bipartisan Commission on Central America (the Kissinger report) states, for instance, that preventing the Soviet Union from establishing military bases or facilities in the region is not the sole or even the primary security concern; but where a convincing statement of exactly what is, in fact, at stake would have been appropriate, the report trails off into vague generalities. Repeated presidential assertions of a U.S. national security concern in the Caribbean Basin have been similarly imprecise. What then is really at stake in the region?

The very concept of the Caribbean Basin has been resurrected in recent years from the writings of the nineteenth-century geopolitical theorists, particularly Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan and Sir H. Halford MacKinder. These writers emphasized the strategic and tactical importance for the United States, then emerging as a world power, of controlling its border region and of securing the naval passages through the Caribbean. From their standpoint, the entire circum-Caribbean region (including the Central American isthmus) was of vital significance to the United States because of its proximity.

In most respects, however, the islands of the Caribbean are very different from the countries of the isthmus of Central America. The Caribbean islands — some thirty-two political entities, sixteen of them independent countries, with a population totaling about 30 million people — are remarkably diverse, yet in some ways overwhelmingly alike. Except for Cuba and Hispaniola (the island that includes both the Dominican Republic and Haiti), most are very small. Two-thirds of the Caribbean islands could fit together into the King Ranch in Texas, or inside the Everglades in Florida. Grenada is not much larger in area than the District of Columbia or Martha's Vineyard, and its entire population could fit into the Rose Bowl. Trinidad is smaller than Rhode Island. Jamaica is the size of Connecticut. The total population of all the Windward and Leeward islands is less than that of South Dakota. Even Cuba, by far the largest Caribbean island, is smaller in area than Ohio; it is about the size of Virginia.

None of the insular Caribbean territories is ethnically or culturally homogeneous. Five racial groups (black, white, oriental, native Indian, and East Indian) and their numerous subgroups and combinations mingle with varying degrees of integration and hostility, and with considerable consciousness of color and shade. Numerous languages and dialects are spoken within the region, including Dutch, English, French, and Spanish and their derivatives, plus the Creole mixtures with African and Indian tongues. Caribbean religious sects are

similarly diverse.

Although the per capita income in some Caribbean islands is high by third-world standards, poverty is widespread in much of the region, and overall, the regional economies are in deep trouble. World demand for two major Caribbean exports — sugar and bauxite — is stagnant, and prices are low. The region's share of world tourism revenues fell in the late 1970s and has not recovered.

High prices for petroleum and other vital imports placed additional strains on most Caribbean economies in the 1970s and into the 1980s. Land concentration continued to be high, wage differentials remained great, income distribution was badly skewed, and structural unemployment and underemployment remained a fundamental problem. And practically all the Caribbean nations are heavily dependent on exporting a few primary products and are vulnerable to international market fluctuations and to the vagaries of disease and weather. Most of the islands have only a few known resources, apart from the sun and the sea. All have limited domestic markets and small local savings. Agriculture is weak and declining throughout most of the region. Per capita food production has dropped in most of the insular Caribbean, and regional imports of food have risen.

But while agriculture has declined, so has the push toward industrialization. The regionwide burst of "industrialization by invitation" during the 1960s reached the limits of import substitution and market scale and quickly ran out of steam. Unemployment and underemployment, consequently, are high throughout the Caribbean. Most of the islands are extremely overpopulated, and emigration from all of them is high.

Most of the migrants enter the United States, legally and illegally. Since World War II, close to five million Caribbeans have entered the United States. Almost two million Puerto Ricans have come in, as well as more than one million Cubans, about one million West Indians, over half a million Dominicans, and more than three hundred thousand Haitians. Some 20 percent of legal immigrants to the United States, and an equal or higher percentage of illegal entrants, come from the



Caribbean. This flow is a response both to regional overpopulation and poverty and to the magnetic attraction of the U.S. economy. To a large extent, the Caribbean islands have become demographically integrated with the United States.

The Caribbean territories are insular, not just geographically, but socially and culturally, as well. Caribbean nations are searching for identity and meaning, trying to draw on the shared experience of slavery, migration, and colonialism to derive an acceptable heritage. Their social structures, economies, race relations, and interaction with the external world all bear the mark of centuries of colonial rule and plantation societies.

The Central American nations are quite different from those of the insular Caribbean. They are larger in territory than most of the Caribbean islands: most are equivalent to small- or medium-sized states of the United States. Except for Guatemala, where half the population is Indian (and the Miskito Indian enclave in Nicaragua and the Kuan Indian region in Panama), they are ethnically more homogeneous and less influenced by African immigration than are the Caribbean islands. They are all Spanish-speaking, and they have many cultural, economic, and political links with one another; indeed, they are in a sense "a nation divided," for all but Panama once formed a regional unity. Their economies are more industrialized than those of the insular Caribbean and are more diversely integrated into world markets.

Likewise, the Central American nations, independent since the nineteenth century, are more secure in their cultural and political identities. Although they are export-oriented and tied primarily to the U.S. market, they are less exclusively tied to the United States than are the Caribbean islands. Although several of the Central American countries are very densely populated — El Salvador's figure of 580 persons per square mile is among the world's highest — their resource base is richer than that of most of the Caribbean islands. Their rate of emigration historically has been considerably lower than that of the insular Caribbean, though it is rising fast as a result of the bitter conflicts now underway.

Most of the Central American nations experienced very rapid economic growth and social change during the 1960s and until the mid-1970s. From 1950 to 1978, the nations of Central America averaged an annual real rate of economic growth of 5.3 percent. Real per capita income doubled over those years. Physical infrastructure in Central America, including roads, port facilities, electrical energy, and mass communications, expanded remarkably. The rate of adult literacy rose from about 44 percent to 72 percent over these years. Urbanization increased at a similar pace, from 16 percent in 1950 to 43 percent urban in 1980.

In the mid-1970s, however, the economic expansion in Central America slowed and in some countries reversed. The easy phase of import substitution was exhausted in most of these countries by about 1970. The economic benefits of the Central American Common Market, of considerable impor-

tance in the early 1960s, gave way in the late 1960s to intraregional tensions that were exemplified by the 1969 "Soccer War" between El Salvador and Honduras. And Central America, without any oil resources except those in Guatemala, was hard hit by the worldwide increase in energy costs; the region's oil bill climbed from \$189 million in 1973 to about \$1.5 billion in 1980, while the prices of the region's main exports lagged.

Central America's economic woes have worsened dramatically since the late 1970s. The region's terms of trade have deteriorated severely, by almost 50 percent from 1977 through the mid-1980s. The volume of Central America's exports has decreased by some 20 percent since 1980, and intraregional trade has dropped almost 35 percent. Central America has been very hard hit, too, by other consequences of the international recession. These include the dramatically increased regional debt of \$14 billion and the burgeoning debt service costs, which reached \$1.5 billion in 1982, equivalent to 33 percent of the region's export earnings. Capital flight has also increased, to an estimated \$3 billion since 1979. Per capita incomes in Costa Rica and Guatemala are down to the 1972 level, and incomes in Honduras are back to the 1970 level, while in Nicaragua and El Salvador — wracked by civil strife — they have fallen to the levels of the early 1960s.

As economic difficulties have mounted, the striking socioeconomic inequities in most Central American nations (except for Costa Rica) have become more extreme and have aggravated internal tensions. The size of the average plot owned by the highland Indians in Guatemala was cut in half from 1955 to 1978, and the number of landless peasants in El Salvador grew from 11 percent of the rural population in 1961 to 40 percent in the late 1970s. In most Central American countries, the real per capita incomes of the poorest 20 percent of the population fell during the 1970s and has continued to fall in the 1980s. Estimates from the UN Economic Commission on Latin America (ECLA) suggest that 65 percent of Central America's population should be classified as "poor," and 42 percent as "critically poor." Fifty-two percent of Central America's children, according to ECLA, are malnourished.

The desperate poverty and the increasing concentration of land ownership and income in Central America are part of a syndrome. Small groups have monopolized political power (often with U.S. support) and have used it to reinforce their dominance over the export-based economics. Production of cash crops for export has been crowding out small scale agriculture since the late nineteenth century. The process intensified in the 1950s and 1960s, when the oligarchies manipulated their control of the banking and judicial systems (and the local militaries) to cash in on booming world prices for cotton and beef. While a few plantation owners and ranchers enriched themselves, small farmers lost their lands and were forced to become rural wage-laborers. The Central American Common Market stimulated some foreign investors in the 1960s to set up industries that produced for the expanded regional market, but migration to the cities by landless peasants outstripped industrial employment.

As income distribution in Central America has worsened, both political repression and insurgency have increased. Central America has been wracked since the late 1970s by bitter internal struggles.

Nicaragua's broke out first, in part because of the excesses of the Somoza dynasty. A powerful, broadly based national opposition to the Somozas grew during the 1970s, culminating in the overthrow of General Anastasio Somoza in 1979. But the removal of Somoza did not end Nicaragua's civil war, for opposition quickly developed to the victorious Sandinista movement. The fact that the military opposition to the Sandinista government is made possible by U.S. support for the *contras* is evident, but it is equally incontrovertible that thousands of Nicaraguans are sufficiently disaffected by the Sandinistas to fight a bitter guerrilla war.

El Salvador has for several years also experienced an intense civil war, pitting Marxist-led guerrilla groups against the country's armed forces. Leftist groups in El Salvador, like those in Nicaragua during the late 1970s, have received some Cuban encouragement and support (as well as some Nicaraguan assis-

tance since 1979), but the main impetus has been local. Guatemala has experienced prolonged bloodletting, more violent in some years than in others, but with little respite since the 1950s. Honduras, the poorest of the Central American nations, teeters on the edge of violence. Even Costa Rica, long tranquil, has begun to experience incidents of terrorism.

The disruption that accompanies civil turmoil, moreover, has further clouded economic prospects in most of Central America. Central America's internal wars during the past decade have killed almost 150 thousand people, displaced at least 1.5 million more, and caused hundreds of millions of dollars of damage. The crumbling of Central America's remaining oligarchies and the further polarization of Latin America's most bitterly divided countries contrast with the muted unease of most of the insular Caribbean.

Although the United States has historically exerted considerable influence on the Central American isthmus, the region is less closely tied to the United States than are the Caribbean islands. After a surge in the 1960s, direct U.S. investment in the countries of Central America, except Panama, slowed again in the 1970s and decreased in the early 1980s. It now

T **Strengthening Latin American democracy**

he United States and the other democratic nations of the Americas share an interest in fostering open, constitutional, and participatory policies throughout the hemisphere. To be sure, neither the United States nor any other nation can impose democracy on another. Democracy is not an export commodity; it cannot simply be shipped from one setting to another.

Yet the nations of the hemisphere can work together to strengthen democracy in several ways:

First, they can emphasize a consistent concern with the protection of fundamental human rights. Regimes that grossly and systematically violate human rights should be denied military and economic assistance, and they should not be treated as friends or allies.

Second, the countries of the hemisphere can fortify the social underpinnings of democracy by confronting the gross inequities in Latin America that breed revolution and repression. Bilateral and multilateral programs are needed to alleviate poverty, encourage family planning, improve basic education and primary health care, and support small-scale agriculture.

Third, the nations of the Americas can cooperate to strengthen the institutions and practices that are the very fabric of democracy. Inter-American programs can provide technical assistance to legislatures on such matters as budget, oversight, and civilian control of the military in

order to enable congresses to play larger and more constructive roles in democratic governance. Regional programs can improve the training and reinforce the commitment of judicial and law enforcement officials. Inter-American efforts should be institutionalized to provide an impartial and professional capacity for monitoring elections to assure that they are free and fair. Latin American political parties, professional associations, trade unions, and other non-governmental organizations can be helped internationally with training, funding, and advice. External support, material and moral, can also be provided to protect the freedom of the press and to enhance the contribution of journalism to democratic politics.

In all such efforts, multilateral programs are far more likely to be effective than bilateral ones, and non-governmental mechanisms are more acceptable than official ones. But as the hemisphere's largest and most influential democracy, the United States has a special role. Washington could contribute significantly, for example, by mobilizing its influence on Latin America's armed forces to reinforce their commitment to constitutional procedures. Through the advice of its military missions, the content of its training programs, and the broader influence of consistent political signals, the United States could help keep Latin America's armed forces in the barracks and out of politics.

The most important contribution the United States could make to strengthen Latin American democracy in the 1980s, however, is indirect: leadership to resolve the debt crisis and thereby provide Latin America's democracies the breathing space they need to meet popular needs and expectations.

A.F.L.

amounts to less than \$800 million: about 2.5 percent of U.S. direct investment in Latin America, 10 percent of U.S. investment in the insular Caribbean, and less than 0.3 percent of worldwide U.S. investment. The financial involvement of U.S. banks in Central America is less than 2.3 percent of their total exposure in Latin America and the Caribbean, and it has been declining further in the face of the region's turmoil. Nor is U.S. trade with Central America very significant: it comprises only 5 percent of U.S. trade with all of Latin America, about 30 percent of U.S. trade with the insular Caribbean, and less than 1 percent of the worldwide commerce of the United States. The economic stake of the United States in Central America today is modest. It is more limited than the U.S. economic stake in the insular Caribbean, and it is much smaller than the U.S. economic stake in either of the giants Mexico or Brazil.

Although otherwise different from each other, the countries of the Caribbean and Central America are similar in one very important respect. Clustered around the Caribbean Sea — America's Mediterranean — they comprise the "third border" of the United States. The proximity of the Caribbean Basin to the United States has been that region's defining characteristic ever since this country burst onto the international scene as a significant power in the nineteenth century. The United States rose to international prominence precisely by exerting its influence in the circum-Caribbean region, starting with Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Such a development was hardly surprising. A considerable share of U.S. foreign investment and trade was then concentrated in the Caribbean and Central America. This nation's most important overseas military installations were the network of coaling stations and naval bases established to protect U.S. interests in the region — especially to assure access to the Panama Canal, constructed at the turn of the century. A primary aim of U.S. foreign policy, therefore, was to prevent extra-hemispheric powers from expanding their influence in the Caribbean Basin. The annexation of Puerto Rico, the Platt amendment imposed on Cuba, the promulgation of the (Theodore) "Roosevelt corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine, the repeated U.S. military interventions in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Central America — all were part of a sustained effort by the United States to secure absolute control of its border region.

From the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s, however, tangible U.S. interests in the Caribbean and Central America changed a great deal. The region's military importance diminished as new technology (especially intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear submarines) drastically reduced the significance of proximity. Preserving U.S. access to the Panama Canal remains an important U.S. aim, but it is no longer a "vital interest." Today's aircraft carriers and supertankers are too large to transit the canal, and the share of U.S. commerce passing through the canal has declined to less than one-sixth of this country's total ocean-bound trade. Some U.S. bases and

other military assets in the circum-Caribbean region are still useful, especially for training purposes and as listening posts. Their diminished significance in the 1970s was made evident by the Pentagon's decision to downgrade or close several Caribbean facilities, and by the reduction in the number of U.S. military personnel stationed in the region.

The sea lanes that pass through the Caribbean remain important to the United States; almost half of all foreign cargo tonnage and of the crude oil imported into the United States transit them. But absolute control of each Caribbean Basin country is no longer needed to protect these lanes. A Caribbean Basin nation (such as Cuba or Nicaragua) which sought to disrupt the sea lanes would find itself instantly vulnerable to the overwhelming power of the United States, only minutes away. It is hard to imagine a credible scenario in which the Caribbean sea lanes would be disrupted. Even if the Soviet Union were to undertake the risky enterprise of interfering with U.S. shipping, it would be more likely to do so in the North Atlantic than in the Caribbean, where the relative disparity in easily projectable power is so favorable to the United States.

U.S. economic interests in the Caribbean Basin have also declined, both in absolute and in relative terms. U.S. investment in the insular Caribbean accounts for less than 2.5 percent of the total book value of all direct U.S. foreign investment; even that figure would be much lower if the essentially paper investment in the Bahamas were excluded. The U.S. investment stake in Central America, as has been noted, is even smaller. Moreover, it has been declining in recent years and is unlikely to expand significantly while conditions of violent instability prevail. Likewise, the relative importance of Central America and the Caribbean as sources for products and materials has diminished, as the worldwide involvements of the United States have produced multiple suppliers, and synthetics have replaced natural products. The main items exported from Central America — bananas, coffee, cotton, cocoa, and sugar — are all items for which the U.S. market is very important to the producers, but on which the United States surely does not depend. The United States does import 85 percent of its bauxite and 25 percent of its processed aluminum from the Caribbean Basin, mainly from Jamaica, but there are other sources for these materials.

Two newer U.S. interests in the Caribbean Basin have emerged in recent years, particularly with regard to the insular Caribbean. One is diplomatic: the Caribbean nations wield many votes in the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and other bodies. The Caribbean democracies have consistently supported U.S. positions on a number of international issues; their hostility would be irritating.

A second U.S. stake in the insular Caribbean, and to a lesser extent in Central America, is demographic; the ramifications of immigration from these regions into the United States. The much-publicized flight of more than 10 percent of Cuba's population to the United States since 1959 tends to overwhelm

an even more impressive statistic: the percentage of people from the rest of the Caribbean who have entered the United States during the same period is as high. This massive flow affects the economy, politics, and culture of the United States. The United States and the Caribbean import from each other music, dance, crime, cuisine, literature, and political ideas and techniques. Large Caribbean communities are visible in Florida, New York, New Jersey, and other regions of this country. In some cases these increasingly large groups of immigrants are a source of local anxieties and tensions: in any case, the United States has an interest in regularizing and regulating migration from the Caribbean Basin.

In sum, traditional U.S. interest in the insular Caribbean and Central America has declined over the last generation, although they are still emphasized in official documents and discussions. Newer U.S. interests in these regions, particularly the diplomatic and demographic concerns, have increased in significance but not yet in salience; President Reagan's key address to the OAS on the Caribbean Basin Initiative did not even mention migration, for instance. The main reason U.S. policy-makers have rediscovered the Caribbean and Central America arises instead from an almost reflexive U.S. aim to retain overwhelming predominance in the border region.

Washington's strong interest in retaining absolute control of the Caribbean Basin is axiomatic, having been inculcated ever since the late nineteenth century through years of repetition in internal documents and public pronouncements. It is reinforced by most U.S. political leaders' perceptions of domestic public opinion. These leaders believe that an administration identified as having "lost" a country previously in the U.S. orbit, having permitted a "second Cuba," would suffer a high domestic political cost. And the urge to retain tight control is further strengthened by a calculus about international prestige. United States officials do not want the United States to be perceived abroad as being unable to maintain dominance so close to home.

To some extent, recent U.S. administrations have been caught in a credibility trap of their own making, as they have voluntarily raised the declared stakes for the United States in the Caribbean Basin and then escalated U.S. involvement to match the stakes. But the underlying perception that U.S. influence in the world would suffer if hostile states emerged in this country's border region has been widely accepted for many years. The costs to U.S. credibility and prestige of unnecessary, divisive, and ineffectual U.S. efforts to reimpose U.S. control in a country like Nicaragua, conversely, have rarely been assessed.

It may be that the underlying rationale of recent U.S. policy can be understood best not in terms of "national security" as it is usually discussed, but, rather, in terms of "national insecurity." What is fundamentally at issue, more than any tangible challenge, may be the psychological or psychopolitical difficulty of coping with loss of control in the border region. United States policy-makers have considered it important to retain

U.S. control of the internal politics of Caribbean Basin countries, even though the object of this control is far less significant than it used to be. And the United States has sought to retain its overwhelming control, even though the domestic and international costs of perpetuating this stance are increasingly high in the face of nationalists and revolutionary movements. That is the heart of the matter in the Caribbean Basin.

Discussions of U.S. relations with the Caribbean Basin often suffer from a tendency to treat ideal visions of the region as realistic objectives of U.S. policy, and thus to confuse unattainable preferences with core U.S. interests. The vision that the Kissinger report holds out as the correct aim of U.S. policy in Central America, for example, is one of securing and supporting peaceful, democratic, reform-oriented, stable, prosperous, and congenial neighbors. This goal is utterly unrealistic, however. Except for Costa Rica, Central America's nations are conflict-wracked, repressive, polarized, economically depressed, and unstable, and they harbor deep resentments of the United States. No U.S. policy could soon change these grim realities. On the contrary, part of this country's problem in Central America stems from the paradox that an increased U.S. presence may well heighten the very nationalist and revolutionary sentiments that make Washington uncomfortable. In this sense, the goals posited by the Kissinger report and other recent official articulations of U.S. policies toward Central America and the Caribbean are not merely unrealistic; they are like a mirage, receding inevitably as they are approached.

To fashion a successful U.S. policy toward the Caribbean Basin, it is essential to define the core objectives of the United States.

The primary U.S. interest in the Caribbean Basin, today as in the past, is to prevent hostile extra-hemispheric forces from using the area as a platform for directing damaging activities against the United States or its allies. In contemporary terms, this means assuring that no bases, strategic weapons or facilities, or combat forces are introduced by the Soviet Union or its allies into the border region of the United States.

In fact, given the presence of missile-toting Soviet submarines off the Atlantic coast, such facilities or forces would probably not very markedly increase the Soviet military threat to the United States. But threatening bases or facilities in the Caribbean Basin would pose some additional danger, at a margin where each increment matters. Equally important, in a world where perceptions can themselves create realities, the United States would appear weak if it could not keep provocative, direct challenges to its military security out of its immediate vicinity.

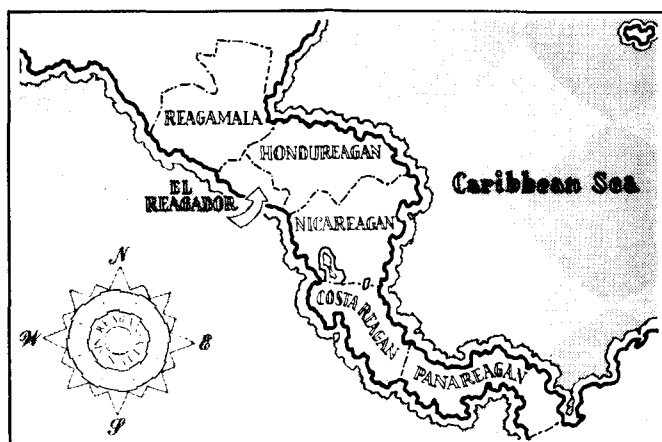
The second core interest of the United States in the Caribbean Basin today is to assure continuing access to the assets of Central America and the Caribbean, primarily the Panama Canal but also the sea lanes. It has historically been important for the United States to maintain secure access to these assets without making a major investment of resources, and this

objective remains a priority. Trying to maintain tight control of the internal affairs of Caribbean Basin nations may no longer be the most effective means of achieving this goal, however. On the contrary, the Panama Canal treaties of 1978 suggest that accommodating nationalist impulses in the Caribbean Basin region is sometimes a more effective means of protecting U.S. interests than is resisting such nationalist currents. It is also important for the United States to reduce the risk of a regional conflagration in the Caribbean Basin, for such an outbreak would be far more likely than any domestic political change within the individual Caribbean nations to disrupt U.S. access to the region's assets.

The third important U.S. interest in the Caribbean Basin is to decrease the pressure for immigration into the United States, a pressure created by continued economic decline and violent turmoil in the region. The causal connections between development and migration are complex, and the United States cannot be confident that pressures for migration from the Caribbean Basin will diminish just as soon as economic development in the region picks up. It is clear, however, that worsening economic conditions will heighten pressures for emigration, and that increasing polarization and strife will increase migration, regardless of the results of a civil war.

This interest in stemming the flow of migration from the Caribbean Basin leads to a fourth and broader U.S. interest: promoting economic development and long-term political stability in the Caribbean Basin countries so that they can become self-sufficient. Assuring access to Caribbean Basin resources is no longer the issue most important to the United States. Rather, the United States has an increasing interest in helping Caribbean and Central American nations use their own resources to achieve regional development.

These four U.S. interests in the Caribbean Basin are fundamental, and other aims of U.S. policy, though often repeated by Washington officials, are or ought to be less important. Although the United States should support democracy in the hemisphere (see the accompanying comments on page 268), U.S. policy cannot create democracy in countries that lack the traditions and institutions required or that are in the midst of civil wars. It is not vital for the United States that democracy soon emerge in Central America, where (except in Costa Rica) it has never heretofore taken root.



Moreover, although the United States would prefer that its neighbors share its perceptions of world problems, favor free enterprise and foreign investment, and disdain the Soviet Union and its policies, such regional conviviality is not crucial. If countries in the Caribbean Basin choose to adopt socialist economics or even to embrace the Soviet Union, that can be tolerated by the United States as long as these countries do not offer military advantages to the Soviet Union or Cuba.

From the turn of this century to the late 1970s, U.S. policy toward the Caribbean Basin was one of intermittent intervention. A low degree of interest in Caribbean economic and social realities was combined with a high degree of concern for maintaining U.S. hegemony. In theory, a contrasting policy of sustained disengagement might feature a low degree of U.S. concern with *both* the socioeconomic and traditional security dimensions of the Caribbean Basin. Indeed, the idea of sustained U.S. disengagement from the Caribbean Basin, although it has never been attempted, has some abstract appeal, for frenetic U.S. intervention in Caribbean Basin affairs has often been counterproductive. But disengagement is blatantly unfeasible.

Geography — strongly reinforced by history, politics, economics, and culture — makes the United States a major presence in the Caribbean Basin. The countries of this region cannot escape the shadow of the United States, whether it be benign or stifling. Nor can the United States escape involvement in the Caribbean, with which this country is so interconnected. Whatever policy an administration adopts, immigration from the Caribbean Basin would not stop, tourism would continue, and other business flows would prompt fuller U.S. involvement. More importantly, people in the United States, both at the attentive public and at the mass level, would feel uncomfortable about Washington's abandonment of these countries to their fate. The international reputation of the United States, among both allies and rivals, would also be damaged by such a passive U.S. stance. Great powers simply do not behave that way; disengagement would prove impossible to sustain.

A third option, rejecting both intermittent intervention and sustained disengagement would require the active expansion of U.S. involvement in both the internal politics and the economics of the Caribbean Basin countries. This was, in fact, the policy of the Carter administration and is the policy today of the Reagan administration, although each administration adopted different emphases.

The Carter stance toward leftist regimes in the Caribbean Basin area was (especially at first) to tolerate diversity, even in this border region. The Reagan administration, on the contrary, made it plain from the beginning that it favors regimes oriented toward free enterprise and foreign investment, supportive of U.S. foreign policy and opposed to Cuba, and that it will reward such governments and ignore or punish the others. The Carter administration (again, especially at first) gave priority to multilateral economic and technical assistance; the

Reagan administration has from the start downplayed multilateral aid, preferring visible bilateral assistance. The Carter administration, although willing to commit U.S. resources to counter undesired trends in the Caribbean and Central America, respected the sovereignty of the Caribbean and Central American nations. The Reagan administration, on the contrary, made it plain from the start that it might use force as a means of reversing unacceptable developments in this region.

These significant differences should not obscure important similarities between the Carter and Reagan variants of the activist approach, however. Both administrations have lumped together the insular Caribbean and Central America. Both show a high degree of concern with socioeconomic development as well as immediate security issues. Each emphasizes short-term political considerations and the aim of countering Cuba. Both propose that the United States take the lead in orchestrating regional security and development initiatives in order to combat revolutionary inroads. Both administrations have sought to perpetuate, or to restore, U.S. control of Central America and the Caribbean.

The recommendations of the bipartisan Kissinger Commission epitomized the activist approach. The commission argued that Central America needs major social security assistance, in order to beat the challenge of Marxist-oriented insurgent movements. It urged the United States to play a pivotal role in promoting economic growth, social change, and political democracy, as well as to provide a "security shield" behind which progress could occur. It called for the United States to lead a process of regional transformation in order to preempt revolutionary movements.

The activist approach to the Caribbean Basin has obvious advantages over both the interventionist and the disengagement options. Focusing sustained attention and resources on the Caribbean Basin should enable the U.S. government more effectively to influence U.S. relations with the region. The scale of Caribbean Basin entities is such that even limited U.S. moves can have an impact. Many Caribbean countries are so dependent that an infusion of U.S. resources is likely to fix the



region more firmly in the U.S. orbit, at least in the short run.

But the activist approach involves important risks. First, it may arouse unrealistic expectations within the region. Prime Minister Seaga, for instance, called for a long-term program of aid to Central America and the Caribbean at the level of \$3 billion per year, and the Kissinger commission called for \$8 billion over the next five years. In a period of massive U.S. federal deficits, aid transfers to the Caribbean Basin will be much more modest, however. Aid to shore up military regimes, moreover, often produces a need for more aid. The activist approach may thus produce a troublesome gap between rhetoric and expectations, on the one hand, and implementation and impact on the other. The U.S. public will surely not long support an expensive effort to transform Caribbean Basin realities.

The activist approach has three other drawbacks. First, despite the Reagan administration's repeated assurances that U.S. combat forces will not be used, the risks of an escalating U.S. military involvement in Central America are inherent in the policy of direct confrontation with insurgent movements and unrelenting hostility toward Cuba and Nicaragua. The prospect that the United States will eventually have to choose between humiliation and escalation in Nicaragua is built into the activist stance of aid to the *contras*.

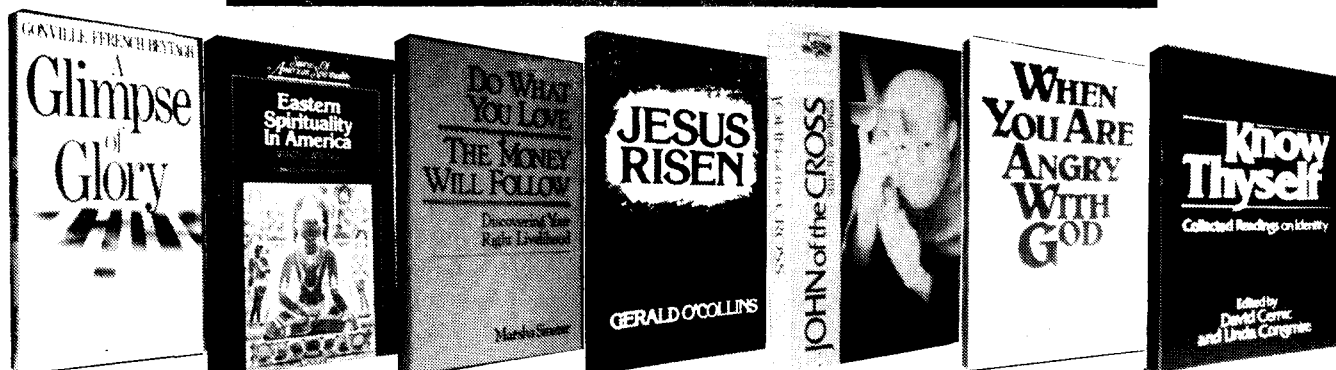
Second, the more fully the United States is engaged in the internal affairs of the Caribbean Basin nations, the greater is the likelihood that this country will have to absorb larger flows of refugees from the continuing civil wars. As the United States involves itself more deeply in the region, it creates increasing political and moral imperatives to assist the victims of violence.

Third, an increasingly interventionist U.S. stance, even if it stops short of direct military action, contradicts the respect the United States must show Latin America if this country is to secure greater cooperation from the hemisphere's major nations. Gunboat diplomacy in the Caribbean Basin may win back Grenada or perhaps even Nicaragua, but such "successes" may well alienate Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela, and other Latin American nations. One event that could conceivably push Mexico into a strongly nationalist, anti-U.S. mode would be U.S. military intervention in Central America. The consequences throughout South America of such an intervention would also be harmful; throughout the region, a direct U.S. military involvement would fuel insurgencies, provoke urban terrorism, and generally stimulate nationalist reactions.

An alternative approach to Central America and the Caribbean would involve a sustained U.S. commitment to the economic and social development of the nations in the Caribbean Basin without a corresponding attempt to exercise tight control of their internal affairs.

This developmental approach posits that the core U.S. interest in its border region is to exclude tangible security threats — to keep hostile bases, combat forces, and strategic

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facilities out of the area. It would accept diverse sociopolitical and economic approaches, even Marxist ones, in the Caribbean Basin, as long as no direct security threats were introduced into the region. This aim would be accomplished not by controlling the domestic politics of the area, but by making it clear to the Soviet Union or other potential adversaries that the introduction of threatening forces and facilities into this region would trigger an immediate U.S. response, and by negotiating verifiable and enforceable regional agreements to exclude such items.

The second assumption of the developmental approach is that the United States will benefit if the countries of the Caribbean Basin are able to grow economically and build effective social and political institutions. The improved viability of Caribbean Basin nations would decrease pressure for migration to the United States and would facilitate expanded economic exchange between the United States and those nations.

The developmental approach assumes as well that geography, history, and economics will tie the countries of the Caribbean Basin to the United States as long as the United States does not choose to expel them from its orbit. Caribbean Basin nations, regardless of their domestic or even their international politics, will send most of their exports to the United States and buy most of their imports from this country as long as they are permitted to do so. They have an interest, therefore, in avoiding deeply hostile relations with the United States.

The developmental approach to the Caribbean Basin would concentrate on long-term economic and social progress rather than on immediate political alignment. It would distinguish between those countries ready for significant economic advance (presently most of the Caribbean islands, along with Costa Rica and perhaps Honduras on the Central American isthmus) and those where civil turmoil precludes effective economic progress in the near future.

With regard to the former group of countries, those ready for economic and social development, the United States would extend the provisions for free access to the U.S. market contained in the originally proposed Caribbean Basin Initiative to all that refrain from military alliance with the Soviet Union — regardless of ideology, domestic social or political organization, and foreign policy. An attempt would be made to reverse congressionally imposed restrictions that have reduced the impact of the CBI for precisely those products on which Caribbean Basin nations have achieved a comparative advantage. The United States would revise its sugar program so that the U.S. market would be more open to Caribbean producers, and it would allow Caribbean producers to take fuller advantage of their proximity on such products as textiles and small electronic appliances.

Under the developmental approach, the United States and other interested countries would provide assistance for infrastructural and human resource development in the Caribbean Basin. Foreign assistance would be provided mainly through multilateral rather than bilateral channels, in order to reduce politicization and to extend time horizons beyond the U.S.

electoral cycle. Rather than increase its visibility in the Caribbean Basin, the United States would gradually lower its profile. Washington might then be less of a focus for nationalist impulses.



With regard to the strife-torn nations of Central America, the United States would cut back its intense involvement of recent years. The United States would aim primarily to stop any of the Central American conflicts from providing an occasion for the introduction of extra-hemispheric military threats, and to prevent the Central American conflicts from escalating, broadening, or contributing to a general East-West confrontation. The main instrument of U.S. policy would be diplomatic, not military. In particular, Washington would genuinely support the efforts of the Contadora nations (Colombia, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela) to mediate Central America's conflicts.

The United States would fully back Contadora's attempt to negotiate a regional political solution to protect the territorial integrity of existing states (including Nicaragua and El Salvador) against insurgent movements. Such an accord would bar both overt and covert attempts to overthrow established governments. It would also, by regional agreement, keep threatening bases, forces, and facilities out of the Caribbean Basin. As part of the agreement, the United States would assure the government of Nicaragua that U.S. efforts to overthrow the Sandinistas would end as long as Nicaragua refrains from attacking or subverting its neighbors or providing a military base to the Soviet Union or Cuba.

Finally, the United States would work with all the countries of the Caribbean Basin to regulate migration. The United States would consult with Caribbean Basin nations on means of keeping migration to this country within legal bounds and preventing exploitation of illegal aliens. The United States would target U.S. foreign investment, trade policy, and foreign assistance to foster labor-intensive development in the region. Local family-planning programs would also be supported.

The developmental approach to the Caribbean Basin — concerned both with preventing direct strategic threats to U.S. security and with the long-term viability of the Caribbean islands and Central America — would protect the core interests of the United States, immediately and in the longer term. It would do so without engaging the United States unnecessarily in these regions' internal struggles. It would keep the U.S. focus on the problems of the Caribbean Basin that should matter most to us, and that we can best affect. Most important, this approach would enable the United States to deal with its border region without distracting this country's attention from the major economic and political issues affecting its relations with Mexico and South America. The challenge for U.S. policy in Central America and the Caribbean in the late 1980s is less a test of national will and credibility than of our sense of perspective and priorities.

EL SALVADOR: THE NEW FACE OF WAR

STRATEGIES FOR CIVILIAN SUPPORT

PETER SHIRAS

Adozen men are digging the foundation for a new school in the hot midday sun, while several young girls carry water from the river at the bottom of the hill. Most of the women are slapping corn dough in the palms of their hands into thick, round tortillas. All are seemingly oblivious to the blaring music coming from a powerful loudspeaker that penetrates every inch of space, even the most distant dwellings, in the rural settlement of El Barillo. Suddenly, the music ends and a woman's voice comes over the system.

"People of El Barillo: The armed forces of El Salvador are here to help you in the fight against Communist subversion. Together, the people and the armed forces will make progress in El Barillo. The terrorist forces only want to destroy the country, but the armed forces will help the people and together we will make the country move forward. . . ."

I listen intently to the message and when my guide, one of the community leaders, sees my questioning gaze towards him, he says simply, "We would prefer to live more quietly."

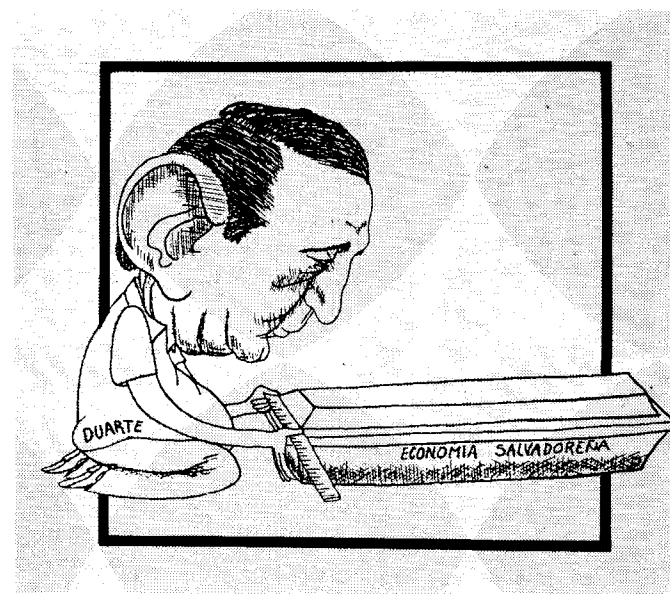
The 470 people who live in El Barillo are in some ways symbolic of a new phase in the war in El Salvador. Forcibly removed from their homes on the slopes of the Guazapa volcano in a major counter-insurgency sweep (code named "Operation Phoenix") in January of last year, these families had been living for six years in one of the most conflictive zones of the country, just twenty miles north of the capital, in territory controlled by the guerrillas of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). The army's actions, accompanied by heavy bombardment, forced the men, women, and children to hide in caves and shelters they had built to escape the army's attacks. In contrast to previous army attacks on the civilian population in Guazapa, this time the army did not leave after two or three days, but remained for up to two weeks. Finally, when the hunger of the children became unbearable, the people gave themselves up to the army.

After spending six months in a camp for displaced persons run by the Archdiocese of San Salvador, about four hundred people decided to return to their homes. Depressed by the

confinement and forced idleness of the camp, the people of El Barillo returned to a cooperative of which some of the families were members. Thus, they became part of a growing number of displaced persons who aspire to or who have actually been able to leave camps or settlements for the displaced and return to their places of origin.

To reach El Barillo, I had first to obtain military permission from the battalion headquarters in San Salvador. The road passes through what is still a war zone along the edges of the Guazapa volcano and is flanked by abandoned towns and hamlets. Driving through Aguacayo, the last town before El Barillo, I was reminded of a similar scene I had witnessed years ago driving through deserted towns in the Sinai desert after the 1967 war. I wondered now, as I did then, whether the people were able to flee their houses before the fighting started or whether they were buried beneath the rubble of what is left of Aguacayo.

In El Barillo, there is life, but it is a life of occupation. About one hundred soldiers lounge around what serves as the town square and the perimeter of the area, playing their loudspeaker and testing the effects of their new tactics. Called "Psyops," short for "psychological operations," this is an important element in the U.S.-sponsored effort to defeat the guerrilla insurgency. Despite the rhetoric of the loudspeaker



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and the soft undertone of the woman soldier's voice, the residents of El Barillo remember that it was these same armed forces that bombed their homes, burned their crops, and forced them to flee during last year's "Operation Phoenix." Those memories do not die easily.

Despite the fact that one reads or hears virtually nothing in the U.S. media about El Salvador, the war there continues to dominate virtually every aspect of life in that country. Although the intensity of the fighting is less than it was three or four years ago, casualties are still significant. Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas attributed 1725 deaths to the war in 1986, while the guerrillas claim to have inflicted 6151 casualties on the armed forces, including killed and wounded.

Since the beginning of 1987, the pace of the war has quickened with a series of attacks by the FMLN. These have taken place in Morazan and the Guazapa volcano area, traditional strongholds for the FMLN, as well as in and around San Salvador and Santa Ana, where only minor engagements have taken place in recent years. The major FMLN attack on the army base in El Paraiso on March 31, in which one U.S. military advisor was killed, offers the most convincing evidence to date of the continuing military capacity of the FMLN and refutes the contention of U.S. military advisors and Salvadoran officials alike that the FMLN is all but defeated.

The military aspects, however, are but one part of the overall war effort. A recent official military document states that the war "is 90 percent political, economic, social, and ideological and only 10 percent military." The loudspeakers in El Barillo are one example of this new thinking and strategy by the military. At a national level, the military's counter-insurgency plan, "United to Reconstruct," is an effort to

counteract the effectiveness of the FMLN in rural areas by integrating military actions with relief and development programs.

The army is calling on all sectors of the population to participate in the program, and has even assigned to the church the role of providing "spiritual orientation to the inhabitants of the consolidated areas and to the camps of the displaced." In appropriating the language of "grassroots development" with phrases such as "meeting the felt needs of the population," the military is attempting to transform their image from that of a repressive force for internal security into that of the benefactor for the Salvadoran peasants. If El Barillo is representative of the army's efforts, however, the program amounts to little more than the crudest form of propaganda, control, and coercion of the civilian population.

With over half a million persons internally displaced by the war, pressure is building both from the displaced themselves, and from the church and private voluntary organizations to look for means of facilitating the return of the displaced population to their places of origin. What is at stake in "United to Reconstruct" are competing strategies for resettlement. The army's plan calls for integrating the displaced into carefully selected sites based on strategic concerns of control and using the civilian population to form civil defense units and collect intelligence on guerrilla movements. The church, on the other hand, views the problem in humanitarian terms, and has supported the people's right to return to their homes free from any form of control or coercion.

While the war is becoming increasingly politicized, political activity is becoming increasingly combative. After a period of relative quiet following the victories of President Jose Napoleon Duarte in both the presidential and legislative elections, the right-wing parties are now vocally engaged in oppos-

A **The impact of Simpson-Rodino**

s if the devastating effects of the war and the earthquake were not enough, El Salvador is now also threatened with the impact of the new Simpson-Rodino immigration law. Both Salvadoran government officials and the U.S. Embassy are concerned about the possible increase in deportations to El Salvador and the decrease in financial remittances sent by Salvadorans working in the U.S. to their relatives back home, as a result of the new law. Both of these phenomena, if they occur on a significant scale, would have a dramatic impact on the Salvadoran economy, and, consequently, the political process.

The major provisions of the new legislation which will affect Salvadorans are employer sanctions designed to

prevent hiring of illegal aliens and amnesty only for those illegal aliens who arrived in the U.S. prior to January 1, 1982 and have been living here consistently since that time. Those who do not qualify for amnesty face deportation, or, at a minimum, greater difficulty in finding work.

Estimates of the amount of money sent back to El Salvador from those Salvadorans working in the U.S. range from a minimum of \$350 million to over \$1 billion annually. If these remittances are curtailed, the value of which approaches or exceeds the total of U.S. foreign aid to El Salvador, the consequences for the already depressed economy will be severe.

In addition, the new bill could cause an increase in deportations of those Salvadorans who do not qualify for amnesty. Already, the U.S. is deporting approximately 300-350 Salvadorans a month, claiming that they are economic migrants and not political refugees. In fact, only 4 percent of Salvadorans who have applied for political asylum have received it, compared to rates of 40-80 percent for Romanians, Afghans, Iranians, and Poles.

ing Duarte's political program. In an ironic reversal of roles, the rightist parties recently successfully opposed a war tax that Duarte proposed to increase the size of the armed forces and augment the funds provided by the U.S. for military purposes. The right used the curious argument in defeating this proposal that since the country is not officially at war (i.e., no declaration of war can be made against an internal enemy), it would be unconstitutional to levy a war tax. It escaped nobody's attention, however, that the war tax was designed to make the rich shoulder a larger burden in paying the cost of the war.

The resurgence of political activity by the right is matched by a similar revival of the political left in the form of trade union activism and popular organizations. While Duarte points to this political activity as a sign of the new freedoms he has managed to provide for the country, the unions and popular sectors have genuine grievances which Duarte's program has been unable to meet. Two centerpieces of Duarte's original program — the agrarian reforms and dialogue with the guerrillas — have now been all but forgotten. The enthusiasm for reforms has been dampened by the determined opposition of right-wing forces in the country and only lukewarm support from the United States. Duarte's bitterness over guerrilla actions such as the kidnapping of his daughter has led him to declare recently that the time is not right for dialogue. The archbishop, Arturo Rivera y Damas, though still sympathetic to Duarte, responded that the time is always right for dialogue since it is the only way to end the conflict.

Duarte's government has not been helped by factors beyond his control such as the devastating earthquake which struck San Salvador on October 10, 1986. However, the government's response to the quake and the political compromises that Duarte has made will have long-term consequences that could further weaken his credibility and effectiveness.

The political fallout from major disasters such as earthquakes has been important to the history of Central American countries. In the case of Nicaragua, many historians link the beginning of the end of the Somoza dictatorship to the 1972 earthquake and the government's monopoly over and misuse of relief funds.

The earthquake that rocked San Salvador left twelve hundred dead and over ten thousand people injured. Approximately one-fifth of the population of the capital was left homeless and the poorest *barrios* were the hardest hit. The quake caused material damage estimated by a recent United Nations study at \$900 million, representing 25 percent of El Salvador's gross domestic product. In comparison, the September 1985 earthquake which struck Mexico City caused greater absolute damage, but had relatively a smaller impact on the country with the damage representing only 2 percent of GDP.

The Duarte government moved quickly to set up a commission made up of private-sector leaders to coordinate emergency relief efforts after the earthquake. Duarte's alliance with the private sector allowed him to insulate his government from charges of misuse of international assistance. It also strengthened his hand politically by gaining him the support of the private sector and thereby neutralizing right-wing opposition. In the long run, however, Duarte's allegiance to the private sector could prove very costly.

Of the half million people in the San Salvador metropolitan area whose homes were damaged or destroyed, over half lived in multi-family dwellings called *mesones*. These are privately owned tenement buildings with the families paying \$30-\$40 per month in rent. Since the earthquake, the former residents of the *mesones* have been living in temporary shacks made

The prospect of substantially increased deportations to El Salvador can only add to the already high un- and under-employment rate of 50 percent.

Church officials in the U.S. who monitor migration issues have already noted some firings of aliens due to employers' misunderstanding of the legislation. The law does not invoke sanctions against employers who hired illegal aliens prior to November 6, 1986, the day the act was signed into law. Employers are subject to fines only if they hire illegal aliens after that date.

Estimates of the numbers of Salvadorans in the U.S. are difficult to make because the vast majority of them are here illegally. Most sources place the number of Salvadorans who have come to the country since 1982, thereby making them ineligible for amnesty, at 200,000 - 400,000. A recent report by the Jesuit-affiliated Institute of Human Rights in El Salvador has stated that even if only 100,000 Salvadorans came back to the country this "will become the death blow to the government of President Duarte because it could provoke a popular uprising

[for being] an alarming phenomenon of unforeseen consequences."

Ironically, in order to avoid the political fallout that could accompany the immigration bill, the Salvadoran government is now quietly pushing for passage of the Moakley-DeConcini bill which would grant Extended Voluntary Departure (EVD) status to Salvadorans, thus exempting them from deportation until conditions in their country stabilize. The Reagan administration has opposed EVD status for Salvadorans claiming that the transition to democracy in El Salvador is proceeding smoothly and political violence has declined. It may finally be the combined weight of economic and political factors which can accomplish what humanitarian arguments have so far failed to do, namely, to persuade the administration to support, or at least not oppose, EVD status for Salvadorans. This would nonetheless, constitute recognition that El Salvador is a country at war and those who are deported there face a potentially life-threatening situation.

P.S.

from plastic sheeting and scraps of wood and metal. The landlords have threatened to evict the former dwellers from the lands they are currently occupying, and in some cases have served eviction notices.

The more serious problem is that no housing reconstruction program has been established for *meson* dwellers. The landlords will not rebuild low-cost housing which is affordable for *meson* dwellers, and the government refuses to expropriate the land to build low-cost housing. When faced with the same problem in Mexico City after the earthquake, the Mexican government moved rapidly to expropriate damaged property to meet popular demands for low-cost housing. However, given Duarte's weak political position and the alliance with the private sector, no such policy is being followed in El Salvador.

The result is that the *meson* dwellers are still out in the street, but now they are organizing and starting to make demands on the government. What started out as a simple demand for housing could easily be converted into a stronger, more politicized movement demanding urban reform. What is ironic is that the *meson* dwellers, who were among the least organized sectors in the city prior to the earthquake, are now being converted into an organized force due to the lack of response to their problems by the government. Beyond that, the government has raised expectations by its promises of large-scale international aid programs, but to date has been able to deliver practically nothing except meager amounts to clear rubble from damaged sites.

From the time of the earthquake, the archdiocese has warned the government that policies must respond to the needs of the poor. In his homily just days after the earthquake, Archbishop Rivera y Damas stated: "If we want to avoid future social catastrophes, the government should concern itself primarily with the reconstruction of the housing of the poorest, of the popular *barrios*, because if not, there will not be any real reconstruction." In a clear call for precisely the

types of policies which the government has *not* implemented, the archbishop stated, "We are making a call to launch daring programs for the liberation of millions of people whose social or political repression is intolerable."

The government faces an economic problem in the earthquake reconstruction which goes beyond enacting appropriate policies. As the U.N. report of the Economic Commission for Latin America concluded, "Meeting the unpostponable needs of the earthquake victims and carrying out reconstruction tasks will require significant additional resources and substantial changes in the allocation of public resources. . . . Nevertheless, it is clear that the economy's response capacity and the resources available are, in fact, inadequate to meet the major challenge facing the country." More simply stated, the government cannot pay for the war and finance reconstruction. The record to date suggests that the Duarte government has opted to support the war effort, relegating dialogue and earthquake reconstruction to low priority status.

Current U.S. policy towards El Salvador has remained largely outside the realm of public debate in this country as a result of the almost exclusive focus on Nicaragua and the *contra*, issue, and because both the Reagan administration and most members of Congress view El Salvador as a success story in Central America. With the election of Duarte in place and a decline in (although not a dismantling of) death squad activity, the story can be safely buried in the mainstream media.

Nonetheless, the U.S. continues to provide over \$500 million a year to El Salvador and the most optimistic U.S. embassy assessments now are that the war will drag on for another five to eight years. If a supplementary request from the Reagan administration for \$172.5 million is approved for 1987, it will make El Salvador the fourth largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid, surpassed only by Israel, Egypt, and Turkey.

With a bitter war still being fought in the countryside that threatens now to make its presence felt more strongly in the major cities, the prospects for El Salvador do not look bright. The human rights situation, though improved from the horrendous levels of years past, is still characterized by widespread abuses. As the latest report on El Salvador by Americas Watch, a respected human rights monitoring group, put it, "In El Salvador today, the abuse of human rights has settled into routine."

If there is hope to be found in El Salvador, it is with the people in places like El Barillo or in the squatter settlements of the earthquake victims. Whether they have been ravaged by the man-made disaster of war or the natural disaster of the earthquake, the people refuse to give up or lose hope. The smallest acts become important symbols. For the people of El Barillo, to return to their lands and plant their crops becomes a way of saying that they are not defeated. For the squatters in San Salvador, remaining on their land in defiance of an eviction notice may be the first step they have taken to lay claim to a sense of dignity and justice.



SWAGGART SWINGS THROUGH EL SALVADOR

SAVING SOULS & CASTING OUT DEMONS

PATRICK LACEFIELD

*Till the day He tells me why.
He loves me so
I can feel His hand in mine
That's all I need to know
I can feel His hand in mine
That's all I need to know*

A "Crusading" Hymn

Twenty-five years later I can still remember the heat. No, not the fires of eternal damnation that I heard so terribly much about. It was being bundled up by my parents in a scratchy brown-and-white plaid suit, complete with clip-on bow tie. I didn't care all that much for the get-up on Sunday mornings, but I was suffering even more on that hot, humid northeast Arkansas Thursday night as my folks shepherded me and my younger sister up the steep stone steps, between the grand white pillars, and into the place where the Lord's work was dispatched. Already a lot of the faithful had gathered. Since this was some years before air-conditioning was installed in the First Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Arkansas, everyone was vigorously waving the cardboard fans with the stick handles. Jesus and the Twelve were in the middle of the Last Supper on the front. A garish, brassy ad for the local funeral home could be found on the other side.

It was revival week.

Now, as said before, I didn't care much for the heat. I did enjoy the guest preachers who dropped by during the week to bring the Gospel. I didn't understand a lot of what went on but these were big, bold, powerful men (always men, of course) who would pound the pulpit and wave their arms, and they were oh-so-sure about everything. Since at age eight I wasn't all that sure about anything, I found some comfort. Call it a combination of spiritual uplifting and Chautauqua huckerstering. One thing you could say about us Baptists — we knew our Scriptures and we weren't shy about bellowing out those hymns. And if we kids didn't squirm too much on the bare, rock-hard, wooden pews, there'd be an ice cream cone afterwards at Stimson's.

PATRICK LACEFIELD served as administrative director for a medical team working with the Salvadoran Catholic church for twenty months and is co-author of *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War* (Grove Press: 1987).

On down the road, I drifted away from the Southern Baptists and that particular straight and narrow path. I never did get back to those "good ol' days" of crusades and revivals. Not, that is, until I was working with the Catholic Archdiocese of San Salvador when evangelist Jimmy Swaggart hit town this January for three days of crusading in this smallest and most embattled of Central American nations.

"We're not in El Salvador to involve ourselves in political affairs, business, or anything outside of the spiritual aspects," Swaggart told reporters, foreign and Salvadoran, at an airport news conference. In a visit to Chile earlier in the month, Swaggart had made headlines for himself by meeting with General Augusto Pinochet and calling the overthrow of Salvador Allende's democratically-elected government in 1973 one of the "greatest acts of this century."

"We will tell the world that Chile is a free country," he told Pinochet, "and our president feels the same way. I know President Reagan personally and I can assure you that he respects you very much." When Swaggart observed that the U.S. press had it in for Pinochet, the Chilean leader responded that this was because "the press is either bought and paid for by the Communists, the journalists themselves are Communists, or they are only interested in making money."



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In El Salvador, the Jimmy Swaggart Association is headed by one Rev. Juan Bueno, a short, stout man with thick glasses taken to wearing dark suits even in the sweltering Salvadoran heat. He's a fiery radio evangelist in the Swaggart mold. Swaggart has pumped about \$6 million into El Salvador, mostly to establish twenty Christian schools in the western part of the country, the area least touched by the civil war which, now in its seventh year, has taken over sixty thousand lives.

Swaggart's three-day crusade in the Flor Blanca soccer stadium in San Salvador was preceded by a publicity campaign that gave new meaning to the word "saturation." "Experience the difference," said the print ads. "A prophet for our times," proclaimed the slick radio and television spots. A \$3.2 million sound system was shipped from the U.S. for the extravaganza. Buses were chartered to carry people from the principal bus terminals in the capital directly to the stadium. Girl Scouts, Bibles in hand, directed the traffic snarled around the area of the stadium. "Patience," they implored, "God loves you." Red-vested Salvadoran youths with Swaggart emblems urged people not to push through the narrow entrances to the stadium. No matter. One didn't enter. One flowed. Above all else, Salvadorans eschew standing in line, even if they *are* imbued with the Holy Spirit.

"Do you love the Lord tonight?" Swaggart shouted to the crowd that overflowed onto the playing field from the stadium seats. "There are sixty-five thousand people here tonight." I observed that he counts crowds about like the Trotskyists did in the halcyon days of the mass anti-Vietnam war demonstrations. When in doubt, divide by two or three.

He began by apologizing for not being able to speak Spanish. "I have heard," he intoned, "that Spanish is the most beautiful language in the world. I have even heard it said that in heaven they speak Spanish." If so, the good Reverend could be in deep trouble understanding what's coming down Judgment Day. Swaggart's translator, Stan Black, a Costa Rican, will by night's end steal the show. Not only will he translate Swaggart's Southern English into Spanish, but will communicate his inflection, his fervor, even his frenetic gesturing.

"Whether you are Catholic or Protestant, the Lord is here with you and he loves you," Swaggart exclaimed ecumenically. El Salvador is about 80 percent Catholic, but the number of Protestants has grown since the start of the civil war. Actually, "Protestant" is a word seldom heard in Salvador since all Protestants — save a tiny handful of Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and mainstream Baptists — are, in fact, "evangelicals." It is often said that in times of crisis, sects of all sorts appear, proliferate, divide, and then subdivide. So it is in El Salvador, where even the Hare Krishnas have a presence and Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses also ply their wares. All are easy to spot — the Krishnas by their saffron robes and shaved heads, the Witnesses and Mormons by their coats and ties. One Catholic priest from a rural area in the embattled area of Chalatenango told me there are nine

families of evangelicals in his village — and two separate churches.

If the evangelical presence is less in El Salvador than, say, in neighboring Guatemala, the Catholic church in El Salvador is concerned nonetheless by its own slippage in winning hearts and minds — and souls. Part of the explanation for the increase in evangelical strength has political overtones. As the Catholic church in Salvador — or rather portions of it — came to embrace liberation theology and engage in social action on the basis of the preferential option for the poor, many upper- and upper-middle-class Catholics jumped ship. This movement was exacerbated by the persecution of the Catholic church by the right-wing death squads and security forces. This persecution cost the lives of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, half a dozen other Salvadoran priests, the four American women missionaries in December of 1980, and hundreds of catechists between 1979 and 1984.

The evangelicals have a goal: that 50 percent of Central Americans will be evangelicals by the year 1990. Not only have hundreds on millions of dollars from U.S. evangelicals been invested in "spreading the Gospel" throughout Central America, but some U.S. government funds have, indirectly, done the very same thing. In Salvador, funds for housing, food, and health care — particularly for displaced people — have been awarded to evangelically-minded groups like CESAD, World Vision, Project Hope, and Save the Children. The Archdiocese of San Salvador, on the other hand, has refused to accept U.S. dollars for its social service programs. "It would be a contradiction to accept this money while other U.S. monies are being used to bomb villages and bolster the security forces and carry on the war," one archdiocesan leader put it.

Also hampering Catholic church efforts to joust on even terms with the evangelicals is a critical shortage of priests, nuns, and lay workers. A number of seminaries were closed during the dark days of 1980-82 and even now only a small percentage of those who enter stay the course and become priests. Part of the reason is the lack of adequate basic education before entering the seminary. Celibacy is a disincentive. So too is the dangerous situation in some areas of the country. While evangelical preachers and missionaries abound, the Salvadoran Catholic church must depend on foreigners to fill many of the gaps, as in Chalatenango where more than half those attending vicariate meetings are from abroad (the U.S., Italy, Spain, Ireland, and Scotland). "It's a thin green line," someone once observed, "given all the evangelization and social action that the situation demands."

"If you have your Bibles tonight, I want you to turn to one of the greatest books in the Bible, the book of St. John 10:10," Swaggart said. Then came the sound of forty thousand believers whipping out their Bibles in unison. "Jesus Christ said these words: 'The thief cometh not but to steal and to kill and to destroy but I have come so that they might have life.'

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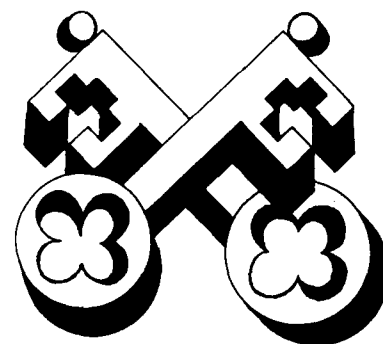
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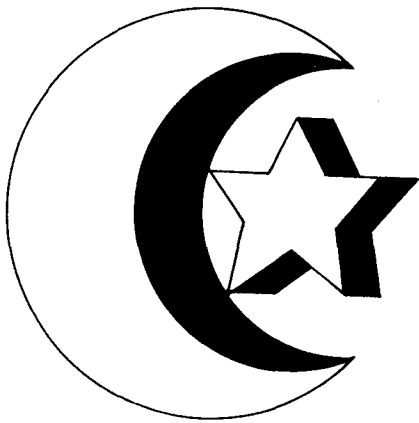
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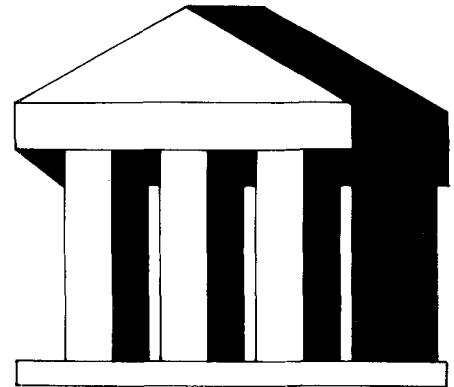
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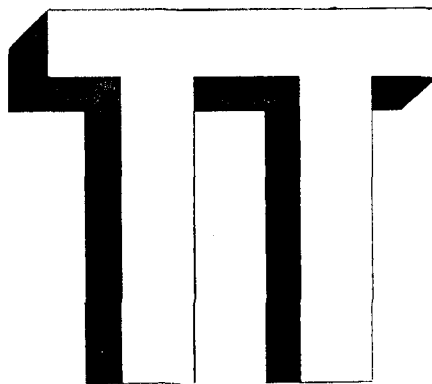
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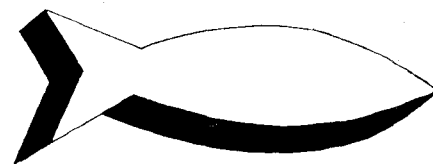
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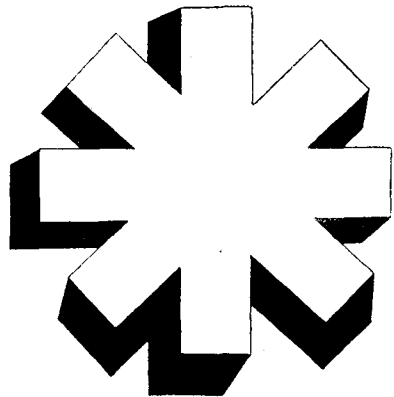
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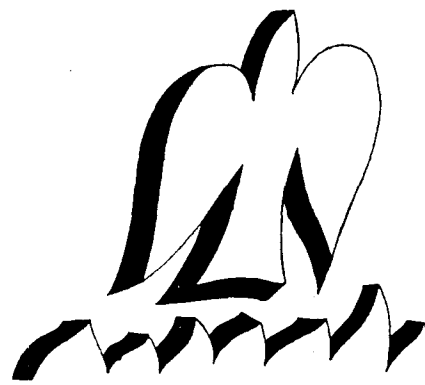
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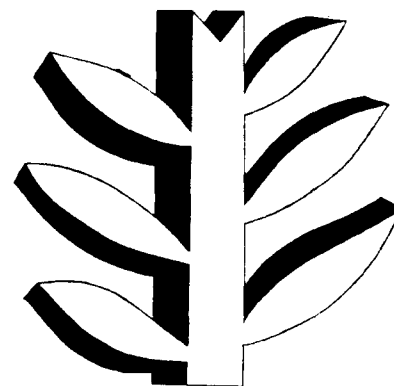
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(Continued from page 280)

"These are the greatest words ever uttered: 'I have come so that you might have life.' El Salvador, you can have life! Brazil, you can have life! Mainland China, you can have life! Soviet Union, you can have life! Asia! Africa! Europe! North America! South America! Give the Lord a hand of praise! *¡Dar al Señor un aplauso de alabanza!*"

He paused for a moment, "I want you to listen very carefully. Most of the world tonight believe in reincarnation. Reincarnation is a doctrine from hell. It is not real; it does not exist. You may say, 'Jimmy Swaggart, how do you know it is a lie?' Because the Bible says it's a lie and the Bible is the truth."

Amens all around. People jump up all around me and raise their Bibles and arms to the dry night sky. "¿Quién vive?" "Who lives?" goes the chant. "Cristo!" roars the multitude in response.

"When God made you, he made you to live forever," Swaggart continued, taking off his coat and loosening his tie. "One day you will die physically but your soul will live forever, whether in heaven or in hell. One day there will be a resurrection. If you do not know God you will be resurrected to damnation, to burn in hell forever and ever. But if you know Jesus you will be resurrected to life, eternal life. Jesus Christ has defeated death! *Jesús ha vencido la muerte!*"

"You're sitting in a lonely hotel room and there are needle tracks up and down your arms. You're on drugs. Maybe you sit there with a bottle of alcohol in your hands. Maybe you sit there watching me on television. You're hurting inside. Your life is a wreck. You've torn your family all to pieces. You have contemplated suicide. But through this TV screen, Jesus Christ is speaking to you. He's telling you, 'I love you.'"

"There is only one way to obtain this eternal life," Swaggart continues. "Religion cannot give it to you. The church cannot give it to you. A priest cannot give it to you. A preacher cannot give it to you. Jimmy Swaggart cannot give it to you. Money cannot buy it. Education cannot understand it. There is a giver of eternal life and his name is Jesus."

"Now you might say, 'Now there's where I disagree with you, Swaggart. How can someone who lived two thousand years ago save me?'"

A hush fell over the crowd. Like the master showman that he is, Swaggart had everyone — myself included, I ought to admit — awaiting anxiously his response.

"If he were an ordinary man he could not do it. Mohammed was an ordinary man. Buddha was an ordinary man. Karl Marx was an ordinary man. Lenin was an ordinary man. Abraham Lincoln was an ordinary man. I am an ordinary man. Jesus Christ was not an ordinary man. Jesus Christ was God."

Not only had Swaggart managed to put himself matter-of-factly in some pretty distinguished company. He had managed to mention Karl Marx and Lenin in public, no small feat in the El Salvador of today.

"Jesus Christ brought a new kind of love. From Luke, these words were so great that people could not believe their ears. 'I say unto you, Love your enemies'. Before Jesus there was only

one kind of love — earthly carnal love. Without God that's the only kind of love there is.

"This morning I met with your president and your First Lady and prayed with them. I want to tell you that the U.S. loves your president." He paused as if expecting applause. Obviously Rev. Bueno forgot to brief him on President Duarte's dwindling middle-class support these days. And this crowd was almost entirely middle-class.

"The United States loves El Salvador," he added. A spattering of applause for "*la patria*."

"The reasons why there has been fighting in El Salvador is because there is hate. In some people there is a heart of hate. Many times they don't even know why they hate. You want to steal and kill and destroy, to strike out at your government or your neighbor. This is the reason for all the terrorist activity in the world today. Hate. Love turned into hate. Until you love God you cannot love your fellow man. When a person has accepted Jesus Christ it's impossible for them to curse or hurt their fellow man."

Yet I recall the words of a Protestant minister in Guatemala, lamenting the hatred some of his fellow evangelicals had for their Catholic brethren in Christ. "I was sickened to hear some of the brethren saying that the Guatemala army was right to kill whole families of Indians suspected of guerrilla ties because it was better to pull out the roots to eradicate the bad spirits," said the pastor. Of course, you couldn't do that without killing the Indians themselves. I can hear again a new variation on an old theme: "We had to destroy them in order to save them."

Some, though certainly not all, evangelical leaders in Central America, have lashed out at Catholics for "doing the work of the devil." All too often evangelical programs in health, agriculture, or education would seem to have no higher purpose than to woo poor people to their fold with promises of desperately needed assistance. "Rice Christians," muttered one American Catholic priest with twenty years service in Guatemala. He shook his head sadly. "It's all so pointless to 'convert' someone on that level." (In mid-February, the Salvadoran bishops' conference issued a lengthy statement on "the threat of the sects," accusing them of "sowing confusion and division in the Salvadoran community.")

Then there are the constant efforts by some evangelical military officers in Guatemala and El Salvador to equate the Catholic church with subversion. One Salvadoran colonel, a



fervent evangelical, told me that he considered himself not only a military leader but also a spiritual leader of the area over which he held sway. "We have to change people's hearts," he told me. "We have to bring Christ into their lives." Yet this same officer denies international medical teams access to his area, and troops under his direct command have killed civilians in cold blood as a warning to the rest not to collaborate with the guerrillas.

By now, the evening was winding down. Some of those in attendance had already headed for the exits. Children, oblivious to the message, were playing tag up and down the aisles. Jimmy Swaggart was talking, still talking about demon spirits.

"You have encountered them. You want to quit drinking but you can't. You want to quit taking drugs but you can't. You hate your promiscuous sexuality, the lust that fills your heart. There's something that makes you hate — it's dark, it's lonely, it's evil, it's wicked. Society has tried to make us

believe that it's the environment that does it. Don't believe it."

Within the last year, El Salvador has been staggered by more than its share of "demons" — a severe drought, a devastating earthquake that killed 1000 and left 100,000 homeless, a worsening economic crisis and a brutal civil war grinding into its seventh year. Is El Salvador so wicked as to have deserved such divine retribution? Is such an individualistic call to redemption adequate to the task of tackling the stark Salvadoran reality? Is Jimmy Swaggart selling social change on the installment plan? Or is it pie-in-the-sky for the faithful and a boost for the status quo in the here-and-now?

The Reverend Swaggart has struck camp, moving on to bigger and better things just like those other master showmen on the Baptist revival circuit back when. The problems of El Salvador, however, refuse to fade away so easily. Maybe that's why all the "amens" and "hallelujahs" came out sounding just a bit hollow.

THE GREAT BRAZILIAN LAND GRAB

ARTHUR POWERS

INTENTIONS THAT DID NOT BRING REFORM

Today we buried another baby. We bury them frequently in Caseara. Babies that will never appear in the infant mortality statistics because no one could take two days to travel to the county seat to register them, nor had the money to pay the registration fee. Fifteen-days-old, six months, a year, two years.

Today the mother sat on the ground outside a palm leaf thatched shack and wailed with grief, her face buried in her skirt, as a friend stood comfortingly beside her. The mother is a prostitute. Most of the handful of people at the funeral were prostitutes — girls, lost and looking for a way to survive.

But it doesn't matter that the mother is a prostitute. Malnutrition is no respecter of persons. Most poor families in the area can count one or two dead among their children. One woman can count fourteen.

When I first came to Brazil with the Peace Corps in 1969, I accepted these things much as the people did. Dead babies, sick and crippled children, desperate poverty: all were part of being an "underdeveloped" nation (for the people, they were

"the will of God"). For four years my colleagues and I worked with community organization programs, encouraging self-help projects. These were good programs and had some results — good enough so that the Peace Corps was eventually asked to leave Brazil.

It was not until later that I began to understand. In 1978 my wife, Brenda (who had also been with the Peace Corps), and I returned to Rio de Janeiro, where I worked as an international lawyer for a large American law firm and she as a community organizer in the slums. Many of my clients stayed at a hotel where one of the women in Brenda's group worked as a chambermaid. They paid \$100 for a night's lodging; she earned about \$70 a month — a juxtaposition I found startling, as did my clients when I told them about it.

New knowledge was opened to me. Working with government tax and incentive programs, I realized that the poverty I had seen as a Peace Corps volunteer did not "just happen." It was perpetuated by laws and policies which, partly through poor planning, partly through manipulation by wealthy and powerful interests, functioned so that the rich grew richer, the poor poorer.

An example was the Fiset program. Brazilian ecologists were concerned about deforestation, so the government instituted a program under which companies received a tax break for investing in reforestation. The companies bought rural land

ARTHUR POWERS is a graduate of Harvard Law School and served with the Peace Corps in Brazil from 1969 to 1973. In 1985, he, his wife, and two daughters became Franciscan lay missionaries. They serve a sub-parish on the Araguaia River in northern Goiás.

from subsistence farmers; assuming the companies paid market value for the land, or at least the price the farmer asked (to a subsistence farmer who has never had to pay for food or rent, \$1000 seems like a fortune), the farmer received enough to support his family for a few months in the city. After that, the former farmer, without trade skills and in an overburdened job market, ended up unemployed in the slums. Meanwhile, his land, which formerly produced food for his extended family and a little extra for the local market, was taken out of food production and food shortages began to increase, shortages which remain widespread in Brazil. Finally, the company planted trees, but varieties which it could harvest most quickly, such as *Pinus Eliotus*, which ruin the soil. Thus in place of one problem — deforestation — several were created: family displacement, unemployment, urban slum growth, food shortages, soil denutrition. Meanwhile, the companies made a profit.

people had won full rights to their land. While police and gunmen stood over the men in the police station and made them sign, the court officials stood outside and chatted. Only after all the papers had been signed did the officials deliver the notices.

Marie Ponsot
**(For William Cook, drowned
in Maine, and for Roy Huss,
lost in Indonesia)**

sist efforts to push them off their land, or when rural workers with hungry families attempt to raise crops on vacant land (by which means they also become *posseiros*), large landowners and *grilheiros* often respond with violence. Documented incidents of violence are legion and increasing. In 1985, over two hundred *posseiros*, rural workers, and supporters (including a priest, two sisters, four lawyers, and fourteen rural union leaders) were killed, most murdered in cold blood by hired gunmen. Virtually none of the killers has been arrested or convicted, even though their identities are widely known.

Many of the wealthy blame the church for rural violence. Relations between rich and poor in the countryside used to be peaceful, they say. The church has stirred up trouble.

In a twisted way, the wealthy have a point. Ignorant people are easy to keep down. It may require violence to oppress people who know their rights.

Eighteen years ago, when I first came to Brazil, the rural poor were more compliant. They generally did not work in groups, had little knowledge of their socio-political setting, and did not think of joining together significantly to change their lives. They habitually deferred to wealthy and middle-class people.

This is changing, and the primary catalyst of change is the church. With pastoral workers in nearly every little town in Brazil, the church has supported the formation of base community groups where the people pray together, reflect on the Word of God, look at the social reality around them, and act to move that reality closer to the Kingdom of God (there is an intense awareness of that Kingdom), closer to justice and love. Out of these groups arise schools, cooperative associations, rural workers' unions, campaigns for rural rights. But it is essential to realize that what is occurring here is not fundamentally reform or revolution but *transformation*: the change is within the group themselves, where justice, love, and unity begin to become concrete values.

The depth of this transformation is shown in the attitude of the people toward their oppressors. As the people realize that their poverty results from the greed of the wealthy, they experience anger: but more than anger, they express humor about the wealthy (whose greed they see as ridiculous) and pity for them. "They have so much, but they don't have God; we have nothing, but we have God." The rich are wayward siblings. When a pastoral worker lightly suggested that it would be nice if a certain corrupt official's airplane fell out of the sky, she was gently reproved by the *posseiros* whose land that official was trying to take.

But the people do act, and the church supports them. The CPT, founded by the Bishops' Conference in 1975, has representatives throughout rural Brazil working with small farmers, *posseiros*, and farm laborers, informing them of their rights, defending them in court, helping them to organize.

The military government effectively supported large landowners. With the demise of that government in 1984, the much-needed land reform began to be talked about. President

Sarney, who comes from a family of large landowners, established a weak agrarian reform project which set the goal of distributing land to 1.4 million families during a five-year period (this would be a drop in a bucket; even the government admits that 10.6 million families presently need land).

The most visible reaction to the proposed land reform was the formation of the UDR — União Democrática Ruralista — a right-wing group of large landowners opposed to agrarian reform. Heavily financed by its wealthy members, the UDR purportedly has close ties to groups of private gunmen (such as *Solução* in Goiania, a firm which hires out former soldiers and police officers as gunmen) and has been accused of smuggling sophisticated weapons into the country. Not all the wealthy support the UDR, but together with it they have been able to effectively block the government's lukewarm efforts at land reform. The president's program called for distributing land to one-hundred-fifty thousand workers during 1986; in fact, only seven thousand received land, and almost all of these were *posseiros* who already occupied the areas in question. It is probable that more land was lost by workers in 1986 through *grilhagem* than was gained through land reform. Thus Brazil continues to progress, backwards.

What does it matter? Eighty-five million Brazilians (65 percent of the population) eat less than the minimum required for sustenance; 36 million minors (27 percent of the population) live in extreme poverty, of whom 7 million are completely abandoned and living in the streets; 13 million handicapped (10 percent of the population), of whom over half are mentally deficient and two-thirds of whom receive no treatment. In the city of Belem alone, *thirty thousand* girls aged *eleven through fifteen* earn their living as prostitutes. Of every ten children who die in Latin America, five are Brazilians. All this in a country which is potentially as rich as the United States, and which presently is the eighth wealthiest nation in the world.

And our little village? Twenty miles outside of town, the last remaining *posseiros* in the district have formed a base community group. They have built a school for their children and are fighting INCRA (the Goiás branch of the National Agrarian Reform office) so as to be able to stay on their land.

In the poorest district of town, a few families struggle toward building a base community group. With the parish, they have started an alternative "little school," a headstart program to try to help their kids break out of the cycle of flunking, year after year, in the state school.

And the rest? The men get what day work they can on neighboring ranches, or grow a little rice on the dangerous flood lands of the Araguaia River, or cross the river to search for gold in malaria-infested Pará. Some drink a lot; some give up and leave their families. The women wash clothes in the river, fish, cull what odd jobs they can. The sick try to scrape up bus passage to Pará where a saintly French woman runs a clinic for the poor; the nearest doctor is 150 miles away. The kids, hungry, play in the streets. The young girls — thirteen, fourteen — run off with men. The bars thrive, the prostitutes ply their trade. And we bury another baby every few weeks.

WE DARE TO SAY 'OUR FATHER'

REFLECTION FOR THE EASTER SEASON

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM

While not as obsessively punctual as Immanuel Kant, I do like to take my dog out for his walk every afternoon at five o'clock. We ramble through the neighborhood working out the cramps and frustrations of the day while watching for birds and other such curiosities that present themselves. For the past few days I have also been thinking about, or, more precisely, computing the number of times I have said the Lord's Prayer in my lifetime. It is not a simple task. First, one has to recollect the likely occasions when one would have said it: every day in parochial school; the approximate number of times that one received it as a penance, allowing for the increased numbers of adolescence; the communal recitations at Mass since, say, the age of six; all of the daily rosaries during the months of May and October; and so on. Each of the occasions had to be multiplied by my lengthening years with reasonable allowances being made for the times the prayer was omitted either through neglect or forgetfulness. I still do not have even an approximate bottom line to share but, let me state apodictically, it amounts to a lot of *Paters* susurrated towards the heavens in one lifetime.

How did I come on this eccentric game? Quite frankly, it developed from a reading of some commentaries on the Our Father written by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. Both insisted that only with awe and fear did one utter the phrase "Our Father." That made me think of the Latin phrase that once introduced the Lord's Prayer in the old Latin liturgy: *audemus dicere* — we dare to say. It occurred to me that I had never "dared to say" the prayer in my life. I learned the formula at the knee of a long-suffering nun and have said it all my life. How many times was that? With that question in mind, the game was afoot.

It is a bit startling that one does something with perfect insouciance when grave doctors tell us that it should be done only with fear and awesome preparation. However, we can console ourselves with the other common teaching of the great masters and mistresses of the life of prayer: the ability to be re-collected in prayer comes, not automatically, but with constant effort, a certain tenacious mortification, and the grace of

God. Attentive prayer, that old tough guy John Climacus once wrote, is so difficult that infant souls (as he calls them) need quantity before they can expect quality. Furthermore, he insists, concentration itself is but an intermediate step: it is rapture in the Lord that is the final goal of prayer. People like John Climacus keep us firmly on the first rung of the ladder.

There is much that humiliates when one reads the truly serious masters and mistresses of the spiritual life. They write after they have experienced and when they have something to say; a practice, if imitated by academics, that would sharply decrease the amount of scholarly writing in the world. Still and all, I continue to say the Lord's Prayer and continue to be unrecollected. It is a very popular prayer. We recite it, for example, in unison, before serving the evening meal at the St. Vincent de Paul kitchen where I occasionally volunteer. When I tried to introduce a substitute prayer a few weeks ago, one of the guests demanded that we say it and, then, as if in defiance, added the Protestant coda to the prayer as a sort of judgment on my temerity. The lesson was not lost on me; we have gone back to the Lord's Prayer since that day. Our clients have a keen sense of tradition.

A case can be made, it seems to me, for the saying of a fixed formula even if recollection is absent, intentions are muddled, or mere reflex takes over. The very act of saying a prayer — the repeating of a formula — is a break from other routines. The gesture may be a feeble one but it is a *gesture* and it does signal, however flabbily, a resistance to the autonomy of the self. So, I still have enough boldness to say the Lord's Prayer, even if it is only after the fact that I remind myself that I should be thinking of what I am saying.

The Lord's Prayer is deep^{ly} and essentially a liturgical prayer. As early as the second century (in the *Didache*) its



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recitation as part of the public prayer of the church is stipulated. There is a point to be pondered in that fact. It is this: for all of the changes in the church in general and the liturgy in particular, either to be applauded or lamented according to one's disposition, there is, at the core of the liturgy, a series of readings, recitations, gestures, and prayers which link us in time with the whole tradition of Christian worship. For two millennia Christians have said the same prayers, responded to the same scriptures, and shared the same Eucharist. When one feels an attack of what Gabriel Daly has called the "old Catholic post-enlightenment blues," that sense of continuity and tradition should help. It may be sentimental of me but it affords me great consolation to remember that when joining with my local congregation in singing the *Pater* I'm in the company of Augustine, Francis, Teresa, and, yes, Alexander VI who also sang it in similar settings.

There is more than traditional solidarity and liturgical tradition to the Lord's Prayer. Saint Thomas, in the *Summa*, asks if it is the perfect prayer. He answers that it is, and provides three reasons for saying so and three responses to those who deny it. The matter can be stated even more simply than that. Jesus taught the prayer to the disciples who asked him to teach them to pray. If Joachim Jeremias is to be believed, not only do we touch the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus in that prayer but, in his use of the term *Abba* we come to the heart of Jesus' intimate relationship to God.

Is it any wonder, then, that the great mystics reach for that prayer, as if for oxygen, when they wish to plumb the depths of our relationship to God? One of my favorite images is of Simone Weil, in the early 1940s, concentrating with that ferocity which she called *attention* on the Greek text of the prayer. Through her blinding headaches, exacerbated by her clumsily inept attempts at doing farm work on the holdings of Gustave Thibon, Weil gave over her powerful soul to the words of that prayer. We have her notes, thick in their compression, as the sole remaining residue of that spiritual exercise. Those who have read them (they are included in *Waiting for God*) can attest to their vigor. There are more aphorisms in that short section than one normally finds in an entire work by a lesser author. When thinking about the Lord's Prayer, I often find myself thinking about her comments on it. "The only temptation for man is to be abandoned to his own resources in the presence of evil." Or, "Our debtors comprise all beings and all things; they are the entire universe." Or, on the prayer itself: "It is to prayer what Jesus is to humanity."

Weil wrote a meditation, not a paraphrase of the *Pater*. There have been many attempts to do the latter. Indeed, medieval literature is full of such paraphrases but they almost never show much distinction. The very compressed terseness of the petitions render it impossible to rephrase them without verbosity. The proof of that is in the fact that two of the greatest poets of the Middle Ages both tried their hand at it without conspicuous success. Dante put a paraphrase of the *Pater* in the mouth of the penitent proud in the eleventh canto of the

Purgatorio without much success. Mainly cribbed from earlier models, it served as a stylistic device for the poet: seven petitions to correspond to the seven terraces of the purgatorial mount. The paraphrase itself, as John Sinclair testily observes in his edition of the *Commedia*, is scholastic and pedestrian. A century earlier, Francis of Assisi also compiled a prayer based on the Lord's Prayer which was also indebted to earlier models (there are echoes of St. Bernard and the Victorines in it) but what we remember is Francis's *Canticle* because it was his while the *Pater* is, well, the Lord's.

In a celebrated passage in the *Quartets*, T.S. Eliot tells us that words "strain,/Crack, and sometimes break." That fracture of language occurs, more often than not, because language is used too much, not too little, and, further, the overuse happens in too familiar settings. the great task of the theologian (as well as the reflective believer) is to recover the urgency and the thickness of words with which we have studded our lives so easily and so often. It is one thing to pray for daily bread in the suburbs and quite another to utter those words in a *favela* or amid the swirling dust of an Ethiopian refugee center.

Most of us, gratefully, do not have the chance to test the degree of faith that stands behind our recitation of prayer. It may well be that we would not turn to the *Pater* for nourishment as did Father Delp as he awaited execution by the Nazi government. But for those of us who use the well-worn words with such facility, there is another, less dramatic, challenge: to stand back and ask ourselves what it is we are saying. It is when we do that that gesture becomes something more. And the more is, to use Buber's word, address.

Earlier in this meditation I invoked the name of John Climacus. His celebrated *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* contains thirty rungs. The notion of ascent is an ancient one in the history of spirituality. I would like to simplify and invoke a triad. First, if we are people of faith (no matter the quality of that faith) we are already people of prayer since "being in faith" is essentially being "in relationship." Secondly, as people of faith we make gestures of faith among which are the recitation of traditional formulas of prayer such as the *Pater*. Thirdly, there comes a time when we reflect back on what we say as persons of faith. It is when that conjunction occurs that we begin to see that the formulas say much more than we can ever begin to comprehend.

And so it is with the Lord's Prayer. Like every great prayer, we read it but it also reads us. If we say "Father" and can mean only father, then we have not begun to pray with daring. If we affirm forgiveness in the formula but do not forgive, then we have not only not understood; we have falsified. If we pray for the kingdom to come but, in truth, are quite satisfied with the way things are, then we are like Claudius in the prayer scene of *Hamlet*. The words fly up but the thought stays here below; words without thoughts ne'er to heaven go.

There is a lesson to be drawn from all this, and it is a simple but profound one. It may take daring to speak the words of the Lord's Prayer as the liturgy insists. It takes even more daring to listen to them.

DANCE

CREATURES IN MOTION THE SHAPES OF PILOBOLUS

During the emergence of modern dance in the United States between the wars, much emphasis was placed on its essential "American-ness" to distinguish its fresh, new approach from the conventional European art form of ballet. Glossed over intentionally or not, was the important influence of Central European Expressionist Dance. Recently the exact nature and extent of this influence has been the subject of extensive debate encouraged by symposia, lectures, and performances. In a rare moment of retrospection last season that quintessential American choreographer, Martha Graham, revived two early works — *Heretic* (1929) and *Lamentation* (1930) — that clearly showed her debt to the Expressionist tradition.

The Expressionist movement reached its greatest expansiveness in Germany in the twenties and thirties, though it was not confined there exclusively. Expressionist Dance evolved from the rhythmic and gestural theories developed by musical pedagogues François Delsarte and Emile Jaques-Dalcroze to aid singers and instrumentalists in achieving greater expressiveness and rhythmic awareness in their interpretations. The theories and techniques found their way into the gymnastic programs of the German school system and ultimately into the work of pioneer choreographers Rudolph von Laban, his pupil Mary Wigman, and her pupil, Hanya Holm, among others. Holm opened her first American school in New York in 1931.

Since the start of his career in 1939, choreographer Alwin Nikolais, an American pupil of Holm's, has developed the abstract play of pure motion, imaginatively enhanced by lighting and the manipulation of stage properties. His pupil, Murray Louis, has emphasized the supple muscularity and quirkiness of the body, often with humorous overtones. These approaches continue to be evident in both their recent seasons.

Underlying the example of Holm has been a concern with performing space as a volume, to be shaped as part of the choreographic design. Ironically, all this work has been carried on as a living tradition in the United States long after the original Expressionist movement itself was suppressed in Germany by the gauleiters of culture who burned modernist books, "decadent" paintings, and forced uncooperative choreographers and dancers off public stages.

In the summer of 1971, a new manifestation of the sculptural impulse emerged. Two Dartmouth undergraduates, Moses Pendelton and Jonathon Wolken, were studying dance with resident choreographer Alison Chase. They invited fellow students, Lee Harris and Robby Barnett, to join them, and

encouraged by guest teacher Murray Louis, they put together a program of gymnastically accomplished and witty dances that quickly brought them wide public attention and acclaim.

Combining their athletic training in winter sports, gymnastics, and modern dance collectively, they created a series of works which explored space with unusual bodily conformations emphasizing unexpected juxtapositions of limbs and ingeniously levered balances. The resultant shapes often suggested primitive organisms innocently working their way through complex physical developments without a hint of dramatic tension. Emotion was deftly forsworn in favor of pure but not so simple motion. The deadpan oddness of their pieces was reinforced by their biological titles, *Pilobolus* (afungus), *Ocellus* (a primitive eye), and *Spyrogyra* (algae). The company took its name from the title of its first work.

In 1973 the company invited two women, former teacher Alison Chase and Julliard-trained Martha Clarke, to join *Pilobolus*, expanding the company's creative resources to include emotional tension and dramatic encounter. The following year *Monkshood's Delight* (quickly changed to *Monkshood's Farewell*) initiated a line of emotionally motivated works that presently dominate the repertory. Unchanged was the athleticism that continually drove the body to new and exciting conformations alone or in conjunction with others.

During their most recent season at the Joyce Theater, *Pilobolus* offered five works new to New York that continued the dramatic, anecdotal strain in their choreographic development. Fluid muscular movement more akin to plastique posing than cadenced dancing, however, remains the basis of company style. One wonders whether the Central European Expressionist Dance could be developed logically any further and still remain within the broad boundaries of dance.

The Middle Ages — with its blend of grotesque, erotic, and gullible behavior — has exerted an artistic attraction for *Pilobolus* over the years. Two of its new works were based on those wonder-full years when demons and monsters flourished. Moses Pendelton's *Carmina Burana, Side II* refers overtly to the music contained on the second side of a recording of Carl Orff's orchestral settings of medieval secular songs. Secondly, it suggests another aspect of the songs' narratives, that of humorous and fantastic presentation.

The good parts were very good indeed. The drinking scenes in which the monks tipped from huge trashcan-sized flagons and careened tipsily around were beautiful blends of off-balance and sheer madcap fooling. Laying on their sides, two barrels were used like the all-encompassing shells of two terribly shy creatures attempting a love duet. Their limbs probed the outside world tentatively and withdrew protectively until the creatures decided that the other was the sought-after one and drew their barrels close, face to face, to roll off happily.

The more gothic elements of the piece, like the inclusion of the devil and a semi-mystical, headless, salamander-like creature, remained essentially intrusions. The tonal uncertainty of their menace, a combination of cartoon and real hostility, confused rather than clarified the humorous intent of the piece,

which at times successfully combined the disparate elements of earthly passion, otherworldly apprehension, and slapstick comedy but overall failed to establish a cohesive mood.

Televisitation, choreographed by Mr. Barnett and Miss Chase, though placed in a contemporary setting complete with a flickering television set, drew inspiration from the folkloric succubus. A sleeping man is visited by a clinging (literally) woman with whom he has three waltz duets. At first, she seems the answer to his dreams, but during the course of the encounters comes to dominate him through a combination of ballroom manners and applied martial arts.

In *Nonce*, choreographed and performed by Carol Parker and Peter Pucci, a less sinister couple developed an athletically romantic duet. The mood alternated between attempted domination and accommodation to conclude with a gentle image of them united. Mr. Pucci's *Lure* was a one-liner about a solo man portraying a fish, attracted to and wary of an intriguing hook dropped into his watery environment. The ripply body movements convincingly created the image of the fish, but once the decision was revealed one had little inclination to see the piece again.

The final novelty of the season was *Land's Edge*, choreographed by Mr. Barnett, Miss Chase, and Mr. Wolken. It was commissioned and performed by the Hartford Ballet last year, after which it entered Pilobolus's own repertory. It suggests a dockside encounter between residents of a New England coastal village and a creature from the sea which is eventually washed up dead. Despite flashes of inventiveness, the work remained baffling in its intent and uncertain in its individual characterizations.

Fortunately the season was well-sprinkled with older repertory works that displayed the humorous Pilobolus geometry undiminished in charm and appeal. None of the older company members now dances with the present group. The current dancers have the skills to perform the repertory beautifully but the special quality of communal choreography that arose from the chemistry of the former group has diminished. That sculptural shaping of space so beloved of Central European Expressionist dancers and creatively developed by Pilobolus for the moment seems to be marking time. That it was an influence, though, in the development of modern dance is no longer ignored.

DON McDONAGH

IN DEFENSE OF WOODY ALLEN

Beauty in a world of schlock

MARIAN BURKHART

Everything has its uses, even negative reviews of movies we love. If none existed, we might never get round to figuring out what made those films so lovable. We might not even note that for the most part the positive reviews missed the boat, too.

Take, for instance, Woody Allen's most recent Oscar winner, *Hannah and Her Sisters*. When it first opened, it sent me and my family home aglow. It amused us during dinner conversations with one another and with friends for the next few weeks. The early reviews I read thought highly of it, too. It seemed I shared, pleasantly but uninterestingly, a common response. Not so. Pauline Kael, whose *New Yorker* (February 24, 1986) review I read long after its publication,

found the film merely so-so. I would agree with her that the picture under-uses Mia Farrow, but Kael very much objected as well to the "quick tour of Manhattan's architectural marvels" that Sam Waterston uses as an occasion for sizing up Hannah's sister Holly and her buddy. Other reviewers, she said, were applauding what was no more than a superficial "romance of gentrification." Tom O'Brien in *Commonweal* (March 14, 1986) joined her in condemning a "romance" that ignored New York's dirt and its homeless. He objected, furthermore, to the film's anti-religious stance, particularly the view of Catholicism implied by the "cold" monsignor and the ghostly statuary.

I have had my fill, too, of the knee-jerk anti-Catholicism members of New York's intelligentsia do not even classify as prejudice, and I drop in my change whenever I come across those bottles the Coalition for the Homeless sets up to

enable us easily to give our mite for those who suffer most obviously from New York's callousness and New York's greed. But both points, it seems to me, slide past what is really going on in the film, and the positive reviews are not particularly useful either. The ones I read saw the "slurs" as Allen's comic irreverence, and having been written apparently by lovers of handsome buildings, opined on the whole that it was very nice that Allen loved them, too. But Allen deserves better than that. He is one of the few Americans who make films — not flicks — and to determine with some precision what gives *Hannah* its charm is no more than his due. His motive for that tour is larger than Waterston's, and if his camera stresses what is beautiful about New York, what he pictures really exists and, furthermore, is central, as is what he has to say about religion, to what the work is all about.

Take one small scene. Mickey, the

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character Allen plays, is walking up Broadway on his way to the theater in which he will see the movie that occasions his epiphany. He walks past stores called "Jhon's," "A Different Step," and "Nuts and Dried Fruits." The lineup is so suitable to Allen's film and Mickey's mood that one suspects a mock-up, but that block exists. I live around the corner from it. It's still there, except that the firm now occupying the premises of "Jhon's" must have seen the movie, too, because for two or three weeks there was a hole where "ho" once had been. It is covered now with black canvas — rather to my regret. And while we're on that block, we can discover where, even so long after Vatican II, Allen found religious objects as appalling as those Mickey brings home during his flirtation with Catholicism. One has only to walk one short block east to Amsterdam Avenue and two or three short blocks south to find a gaggle — some even uglier.

The monsignor to whom Mickey goes for instruction is not really cold. He is merely bemused, as any monsignor with a lick of sense would be if he were confronted by so unlikely a convert as Mickey. The practitioner of Hare Krishna whom Mickey accosts in Central Park responds, with one significant difference, in much the same way. For Mickey is paranoid. His skepticism is so profound, so integral to his character, that next to what we experience of the way he thinks, such documents as Montaigne's "Apology for Raymond Sebond" seem expressions of childlike credulity. His pessimism, his certainty that the world's only order is disorder, is so all encompassing that Hobbes's *Leviathan*, besides Mickey's *angst*, is the effusion of Little Mary Sunshine. How can the man of faith hope to persuade him? One approaches most who consider conversion by suggesting that they read "our literature." The monsignor suggests it despairingly, without the touch of hope that brightens the face of the Hare Krishna boy, for he recognizes that Mickey is not one whom reasoned argument can reach.

Consider Mickey's crisis. He has suffered certain symptoms which his talent for assuming the worst interprets as proof

of a brain tumor — malignant, of course. He visits doctors. He undergoes a CAT-scan. Trembling Mickey, strapped helplessly into the state-of-the-art machine which will decree his fate, is Chaplinesque-man dominated by his inventions as wholly as in *Modern Times*. To his astonishment he has no brain tumor. He will live! He goes out into Central Park expecting to be happy. But instead he suffers his emotional crisis. "I might have died!" he says. "I need answers."

Note that Mickey needs those answers not when he thought himself ill, but when he discovers he is well. That he doesn't have a brain tumor violates the principles upon which he lives and which his life to date has done its share to validate. Things do not work for Mickey. Nothing comes out as the ordinary view of the world says it should. He marries the admirable, stable Hannah, and the marriage falls apart. He does what men who love their wives do when those wives want children, and he has to resort to artificial insemination. After his divorce he dates Holly, when the essentially perceptive Hannah suggests they have much in common. The occasion is a fiasco. In a world so ordered — or so disordered — why *doesn't* he have a brain tumor? If he doesn't, why do other evil things happen? How does one live in a universe so capricious that one cannot count even on disaster?

So begins Mickey's search for faith. He turns in desperation to that monsignor who can give him only a reasoned account of the faith Mickey thinks he seeks. But Mickey is seeking not faith — an intellectual virtue — but an existential event that will shock him out of his despair and destroy it forever. Of course, his search fails. Christ appeared only once on the road to Damascus, and if he appeared again on any road that Mickey knows, he would be arrested for blocking traffic. And Paul, who profited from that earlier visitation, wrote later that we see now as in a glass darkly. Such limited vision Mickey cannot at that point accept. He wants wonders, and his search leads where such searches do lead — to the brown paper bag filled with schlocky icons and Wonder Bread. The image, again, is exact, for, whether Mickey knows it or not, if you seek for wonders, you will find only that which relates quite precisely to spiritual sustenance as Wonder Bread relates to food.

What have other skeptics done in Mickey's plight, especially those who are as romantic as Mickey is? Wordsworth found solace and order in nature. Hopkins transcends and justifies that solace when he says, "The Holy Ghost over the bent/World broods . . . with ah! bright wings." But Wordsworth's vision is no more avail-



"If it's all the same to you, we'd rather wait for the movie."

able to Mickey than is Hopkins's theology, for Mickey, alas, is as much an urbanite as he is a skeptic. If he is to find any sort of peace, any *modus vivendi*, he has to do it not through nature but through the things of man.

Thus New York's beautiful buildings play their part, as the affirmative backdrop against which Mickey's negations bounce. Allen has no need to show the architectural disorder that is as much New York, but no more, as are the buildings he chooses. His characters' lives present disorder enough. What he is concerned with is how quite ordinary human beings use what their world provides to triumph over that disorder — to triumph against the odds — since the means they use are as feeble, as inappropriate, as mired in contradictions as are the characters themselves, as is New York itself.

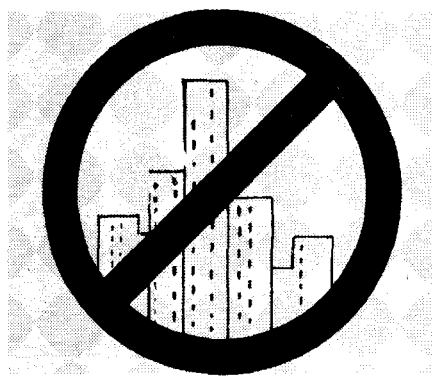
The strongest statement of that theme is the quarrel between her parents that Hannah comes to resolve. Her mother has been drinking. Her parents are accusing one another of infidelity. Hannah sobers her mother up, and her father, now retired from musical comedy, goes to the piano and comforts himself with a singularly overblown and sentimental tune. For those of us with the kind of trivia-memory that recalls the lyrics, the moment is even more precisely defined, for the words are, "You are too beautiful, my dear, to be true, and I am a fool for beauty!" The song catches quite exactly the father's limited world, the superficiality of the songs he sings, the show-biz façade that is his life. But the point is that he *makes* it work. He flatters his wife, justifies, excuses, and sympathizes with himself. He uses the tawdry artifact his world provides to make what is not tawdry at all, a marriage, very much less than perfect, it is true, but a marriage that lasts, against the odds.

Against the odds, Hannah comforts one sister and reasserts the bond that holds them together in the words her culture gives: the psychobabble of "supportive." Against the odds, her marriage lasts, even though her husband has an affair with her other sister. Against the odds, that other sister uses the affair as a means to free herself from the self-centered artist with whom she leads a

sterile life in an unlovely apartment in a bleak neighborhood. Her liberation ties the architectural imagery into the film's theme, for we meet the man she will ultimately marry walking up the steps of Columbia University's Loeb Memorial Library, the first beautiful spot — aside from Hannah's apartment — in which we have seen her. Allen passes over the architectural errors that are Columbia's other buildings, for, against the odds, they set off Loeb and frame a cloistered campus for it to overlook.

That against-the-odds quality belongs to other buildings he shows. Who would have thought New York held Pomander Walk, the small encampment of Alsatian-looking cottages on either side of an enclosed yard? (It is, as a matter of fact, only because of some hard horse-trading that the complex recently escaped demolition.) How could the Ansonia survive a rabidly commercial age in a rabidly commercial city? (It, too, almost didn't. Some fifteen years ago we all signed petitions to get it named a landmark.)

And, of course, Mickey makes use not of a great movie, but of a rather silly early musical to achieve his epiphany, for it is an epiphany of the ordinary, of the joy there is in human life — against all odds. The acceptance he achieves of a world less than perfect, of a glass in which he sees, though he sees but darkly, is rewarded. Things for Mickey go right, so movingly right that I shall not reveal the final rightness. One doesn't spoil the ending of a film that provides a catharsis, that takes the material — family relationships, illness, children — so cheaply milked in a movie like *Terms of Endearment*, and allows us by means of it to see ourselves *not* as fools because we hope.



It is frequently remarked that Allen makes movies by, for, and about New Yorkers, movies that win awards at Cannes but don't play in Peoria. (I must admit I was not surprised when a friend of mine told me that when he and his wife saw an early Allen opus in an Atlanta shopping mall, no one else laughed.) But it is quite understandable that *Hannah and Her Sisters* collected four Oscars. After all, one of the aspects of New York that is most disconcerting is that it is the rest of America intensified. I grew up in Denver, in those days a small, humanly ordered city in which children played freely in parks, the downtown area functioned pleasantly in buildings not too tall to fit the terrain, and the air was so clean that on sunny days it caressed you and you could, on cold ones, eat the snow. When last we visited, downtown was a series of overly tall buildings that made wind tunnels; the bleak post-Bauhaus apartment building overlooking Cheesman Park — my playground — had as its selling point the absolute security of a locked elevator you drove right to, for which only tenants had keys; and one of the city's most serious problems was smog. I can't be the only ex- or present Denverite who finds comfort in nice old buildings that have been allowed to stand and relief in noting that the imposing state capital, centrally located on a large tract of rising land, has not yet been razed for condominiums.

And, of course, all Americans live with schlock, with bad design, babbling words, and tawdry art. Those of us gifted with faith keep that faith against the odds not just of evils like the Holocaust which multiply geometrically the evils people of all time have been subject to, but against those odds that Allen assesses. My daughter was confirmed last spring in a ceremony informed by the Holy Spirit. Against the odds of an overly gung-ho approach, the bishop's dignity as man and prelate prevailed. After the rite itself, the newly confirmed sang with gusto a popular song asserting the necessity of loving yourself and walking alone. But before the rite we had sung, "Come, Holy Ghost," and afterwards, against the odds, the choir sang *Confirma Hoc Deus* in Gregorian chant. I do believe.

Through the eyes of émigrés

Not a day goes by without hearing about Mr. Gorbachev's *glasnost* ("openness"). Have you also heard some of the inevitable puns? Through the *glasnost*, darkly. Is the *glasnost* half-filled or half-empty? Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr Nekrich are not above such drollery in their massive and much-acclaimed history. The book was completed before Gorbachev, but for the American edition the authors squeezed in some arch commentary on the new leader:

His visit to Britain in December 1984 eloquently demonstrated how easy it is to charm Westerners. It was enough for Gorbachev, then the number two man in the Kremlin, to bring with him a wife who differed little in outward appearance from Western women for the conclusion to be drawn that, since Gorbachev did not have a fat wife, all the talk about Soviet totalitarianism must be false.

In the late 1920s Bukharin called Stalin Genghis Khan with a telephone. The Soviet Union has come a long way in the past half century: the new leaders have computers.

This wrap-up is consistent with much of the authors' tone, themes, and outlook throughout the text. For Heller and Nekrich, two Soviet *émigré* historians now at the Sorbonne and Harvard respectively, the USSR was, is, and will always be totalitarian; reform programs are designed to streamline the system, not alter it fundamentally, nor make it more benevolent; and Westerners, particularly the Western intelligentsia, especially Soviet experts, the media, and even government leaders, are naive, and easily taken in by Soviet window dressing (or Raissa Gorbachev's dressing).

UTOPIA IN POWER

THE HISTORY OF THE SOVIET UNION FROM 1917 TO THE PRESENT

Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr Nekrich
Summit, \$24.95, 877 pp.

Louis Menashe

This point of view is common among the Soviet *émigrés*, whether they are professional scholars, like Nekrich and Heller, or from other walks of their previous Soviet life. After a few years of having Soviet *émigré* students in my Russian history courses, I have come to accept this attitude as an unshakable part of their worldview. (If they had it their way, they would elect Ronald Reagan president for life. He understands the evil empire.)

It is not that they are wrong about the Soviet past, with its terrors, personality cults, cultural philistinism, social inequalities, convulsive economic policies, bullying of small neighbors, and increasing global influence. It is that they think that no one in the West knows about these things, that somehow everyone is a Soviet sympathizer or underestimates Soviet malevolence. This peculiar attitude imparts a certain energy and zeal to a Soviet history text by Soviet *émigrés* — the missionaries' confidence of bringing enlightenment to the pagans.

Something else animates the authors of such a text: the freedom to write critically of the USSR to their heart's content, a pleasure they could not enjoy back home. Now they can vent long-suppressed opinions or merely set down simple, hard facts that were impermissible in print (or otherwise) in the closely watched domain of Soviet historiography.

What they fail to appreciate is that this kind of writing is common coin in the West, more prevalent in the U.S. than

anywhere else. If the authors had taken the trouble to survey the mainstream histories of the USSR written and published in the U.S. over the last forty years, they would have discovered information, views, and analysis not substantially different from their own. Instead, they seem to think that if it weren't for Solzhenitsyn or the dissidents or Nekrich and Heller, the West would still be ignorant of the dark heart and dirty hands of the USSR. Ideally, the most appropriate audience for their text is the Soviet public, but it will take a heap of *glasnost* before that can happen.

Rather than tearing the scales from our eyes, therefore, the book clouds them over. The authors are familiar with a great range of sources, especially literary ones, and often draw on them for an anecdote or illustration. But they provide not a single insight nor a body of information that has not already been aired in the West. The authors' zeal becomes tedious, some of their formulations hyperbolic; analysis is overwhelmed by invective and name-calling, not to mention misstatements and misunderstandings.

Was George Orwell "perhaps the only Western writer who profoundly understood the essence of the Soviet world"? After the Revolution were the Bolsheviks smothered "with generosity" by the West and was such a policy "to become standard" between the USSR and the West? Was Lenin "the first to discover the secret of" — the authors take the phrase from Hitler — blending "spirit and brute force"? (Not Cromwell, Robespierre, or Torquemada?)

The one novel interpretation I could find in the book is a piece of revisionist history about McCarthyism in the U.S. that takes your breath away:

The Soviet Union also benefited from the anti-Communist hysteria sweeping the United States . . .

which drove prominent American liberals into the Soviet camp and put many intellectuals who had been critical of the Soviet Union on the spot. They feared being taken as supporters of the "cold war" and the McCarthyites.

There is something, how shall I put it, so *soviet* about the above and many other passages, especially in relation to foreign affairs. I am not alluding to a simple disregard for the facts, a characteristic not unknown in official Soviet pronouncements as in Soviet historiography. What I mean is the triumphalist mode of discourse, the quality of converting every episode into a net achievement, failures into successes, losses into their *dialectical* opposites. (This is precisely the thing Gorbachev is struggling against.)

Ironically, the anti-Soviet *émigrés*, Heller and Nekrich, share in this very Soviet tendency to inflate Soviet accomplishments; everywhere they see the triumphs, for example, of Soviet foreign policy, and the failures of the wimpy West, which always acts as if it were serving Soviet interests. Thus, at a time when the image of the USSR was never darker in the U.S., when the anti-Communist crusade washed the academies, the professions, and the media clean of anyone to the left of Adlai Stevenson, when Paul Nitze's NSC-68 (and George Kennan's earlier Mr. X article on containment of the USSR) helped define the framework and legitimacy for the military-industrial-university complex and the national security state that have become permanent features of our domestic life — at this historical moment Nekrich and Heller see only that the Soviet Union "benefited" and that many were driven into the "Soviet camp."

What accounts for this odd, wrong-headed kind of perception? Sheer anti-Soviet wrath helps explain it; the menace of the USSR must never be minimized if the project is to "Wake Up, America!" Here, the authors differ little from traditional anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism of the Reaganite sort. But it runs a bit deeper than that. The authors are unwitting victims of the very Soviet environment they justly decry. They are

products of an enforced isolation from Western realities.

Moreover, they have uncritically assimilated Soviet propaganda about non-existing successes as well as Soviet claims of presumed support and sympathy of Western intellectuals. One can always point to a Sartre, a Walter Duranty, an Ambassador Davies, and even a George Bernard Shaw in the catalogue of Westerners who at one time or another whitewashed Soviet crimes or badly misunderstood what was going on. This is an embarrassing chapter in Western intellectual/political history. But it is hard to avoid the conclusion that ultimately, with the coming of the "cold war," views that were soft on the USSR had little clout and were reduced to the margins of political life, especially in the U.S.

Do Heller and Nekrich offer any theoretical framework for understanding the USSR in the era of Gorbachev? Not much. Nor do they offer much hope. The "essence" of the Soviet system they

alternately define as terror, or ideology, or one-man rule, or "absence of principle," or a structure of elite privileges, or the oxymoronic, eponymous "utopia in power"; however defined, it is a "structure unique in human history" and "the most inhuman system that ever existed." There is no room for genuine improvement in such a society and no capacity for accepting change in such an absolutist view of that society.

Already Nekrich has been quoted in a recent newspaper article regarding the Gorbachev reforms that "Between words and deeds there is still a big, big difference." True. But it is also true that, to use the authors' categories, between the terror, ideology, and one-man rule of previous epochs of Soviet history and the present one, there is also a big, big difference. I suspect the authors are caught off guard by the Gorbachev phenomenon, just as virtually all Sovietologists were baffled by Khrushchev and de-Stalinization. I prefer to think the *glasnost* is half full.

THE CHURCH & THE RISE OF SCIENCE

GOD AND NATURE HISTORICAL ESSAYS ON THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND SCIENCE

Edited by David Lindberg and Ronald Numbers

University of California, \$50, \$17.95
paper, 516 pp.

James F. McCue

It is not easy to describe "encounters" between entities like "Christianity" and "science." People encounter people, billiard balls encounter billiard balls, but one has to construct some fairly complex theories in order to have Christianity encounter science and vice versa. Here and there there have been people who conceived of themselves rather simply and

exclusively as either Christians or as scientists. In such cases the encounter has been as simple as that of billiard balls. But the difficulty of the subject is created by the fact that across the last four centuries or so, from the time of the "Scientific Revolution" to the present, many people have been both scientist and Christian. So that the problem of the encounter is the problem of the relationship between two aspects of a single personality and of a single though complex culture.

The essays collected in *God and Nature* — written for a symposium at the University of Wisconsin — address the problem of the relationship between Christianity and science in a number of different ways and with a variety of theories. The essays begin with "Science and the Early Church" and end with three studies of relationships between

science and various forms of twentieth-century English-speaking Protestantism. The best essays are those in the middle, focusing on the seventeenth century. This may simply be because the key actors are more easily identifiable there, and because there already exists an intense and quite sophisticated scholarly literature. For both the earlier and later periods, the authors seem to have dealt less satisfactorily with the question of where they want to direct their attention and what questions they want to ask.

Almost all of the essayists are at pains to distance themselves from the perspective of Andrew Dickson White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896). However, as one might expect in a collection of essays, no single metaphor replaces "warfare." There are a few battles — Ronald Numbers's "The Creationists," for example; and there is some conflict — William Shea's "Galileo and the Church." But for the most part there is a complex and more or less positive interaction. Gary Deasan, in "Reformation Theology and the Mechanistic Conception of Nature" would derive basic conceptions of "the mechanical philosophy" from the Reformation (i.e. Lutheran or perhaps Calvinist) understanding of justification and divine sovereignty. No one else makes comparable claims, fortunately, but many see some form of Christianity playing a positive role in the evolution of science.

So much is covered in this collection that it is difficult to know where to begin. The first two essays, on science in the early and medieval church, leave me dissatisfied. They do make a counterstatement to White. The first shows that, yes, the early church was somewhat interested in some bits and pieces of earlier science and did transmit some of that heritage. The second points up some of the similarities and differences between early modern scientists and post-1277 medieval scholasticism (the condemnations of certain theological and philosophical propositions by the bishops of Paris and Oxford in that year being accorded a major causal role).

But both essays suffer from the lack of a clearly defined agenda. Christianity

existed for almost 1600 years, and Western Christianity almost as long, before the Scientific Revolution. It would seem, on good Baconian principles, that the former cannot be considered the necessary and sufficient condition for the latter. Neither, unless we assume that science naturally and inevitably emerges in a society in which it is not confronted by an insurmountable obstacle (a view that seems sometimes to have been taken in the past), can we view it as the obstacle that had to be overcome for science to

emerge. But in between these two extremes is a void that these two articles do little to fill or even to elucidate. Can we say anything convincing about the conditions that gave rise to the flurry of activity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that is not improperly called a revolution? And if we can, can we say anything convincing about the role of Christianity in creating (or impeding) those conditions?

The most closely argued section of the book has to do with the interaction of

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Christianity and science in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This reflects the fact that this is the time and place in which the history of science has been most closely studied and in which it is clear what the most significant action is. It is also a time and place for which we have a highly developed body of literature on the political, social, and economic development of society. Hence the authors are able to put together a more convincing picture of the actual interaction of science and religion.

Perhaps the best article in the collection is Margaret Jacob's "Christianity and the Newtonian Worldview." Yet even here it is striking and important to note how tentative the analysis has to be. Ms. Jacob is concerned to see Newtonianism in its social and ideological role, and at many points she advances interesting suggestions as to the role played by Newtonian thought in validating the new dispensation in England after 1660 and 1688. Yet her remarks need to be seen as suggestions rather than as achieved results. We can note a metaphorical congruence between the Newtonian harmony of a world of atoms and the intended social world of his time and place, but this is to suggest rather than to show that Newtonianism served to buttress that social order.

The essays contained in *God and Nature* well represent that state of the art and the state of the question. They show that the relationship between Christianity and science has been complex and differentiated. But we will have to have better developed models for the understanding of cultural change before we will have a convincing general picture of the relationship between Christianity and science.

REVIEWERS

LOUIS MENASHE is professor of history at the Polytechnic Institute of New York. This spring he is offering a course on "Russia at War" as seen through Soviet films.

JAMES F. McCUE teaches the history of theology at the University of Iowa.

DAVID TOOLAN, S.J., an assistant editor of *Commonweal*, has a new book coming from Crossroad, Facing West from California's Shores.

IN BRIEF

THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR: SHORT FICTION BY MODERN CATHOLIC AUTHORS, selected with an introduction by John B. Breslin, S.J., Doubleday, \$17.95, 314 pp.

Are there writers around today who record what could be called a specifically "Catholic sensibility" in their fiction? Breslin's answer is yes, and for demonstration, he has collected a movable feast of talent. It includes some old familiars, splendid stores by François Mauriac, Ignazio Silone, Flannery O'Connor, Heinrich Böll, Walker Percy, Graham Greene, and J.F. Powers — several of which were quite new to me. But the mix is enriched by Bernard MacLaverty, Mary Gordon, Tobias Wolff, and Muriel Spark exploring the loss of innocence; Stuart Dybek, Elizabeth Cullinan, and Breece D.J. Pancake recalling rites of adolescence; Andre Dubus, Shusaku Endo, Walter M. Miller, Jr., and John L'Heureux plumbing the trials of adult responsibility; Morley Callaghan and Josephine Jacobsen surprising us before death. By the time you are finished, you have had a tour of the Catholic imagination surveying the entire life cycle, no one exactly like the other.

What unites these disparate authors? In his admirable introduction, Breslin argues that it has something to do with the art of maintaining a polar tension between a sweeping inclusiveness (only a hair's breadth away from amorphous pantheism) and an austere discipline of life associated with rituals and restraint. The expansive pole is anything but disincarnate; it involves celebrating the smells of flowers and horses, what Josephine Jacobsen refers to as "a belief in the physical, a conviction of the open-ended mystery of matter." But if this mystery is open-ended, the authors collected here have acute noses for failure, entropy, despair, the deceitfulness of the human heart, and the great hazard of existence. They know the way is steep and narrow (and full of comic pratfalls); no cheap grace. John Breslin's good gathering re-

minds you that fine writers of this stamp who bring you to attention, are fierce and playful allies of the Holy Spirit. D.T.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 258)

sionate concern for a Catholicism that is not constricted, but comprehensive and creatively engaged with contemporary culture can only evoke fervent cries of "Amen!"

Yet the critical *via media* which he so deeply desires — one which confesses a distinctive Catholic identity, yet renounces the retrenchment that is the constant sectarian temptation — seems to stand little chance in a culture where the *Quaestiones disputatae* are not confined to the lecture hall, and where the omnivorous media feast on polarities.

Though all my instincts are with the path he traces, I would complete the spectrum of his, admittedly "oversimplified," prototypical responses by pointing out that in late thirteenth-century Paris there were those who stood to the right of Bonaventure and to the left of Aquinas. Perhaps if our latter-day Bonaventurians boldly denounced the dishonesty of the reactionaries, the fragile *via media* might yet prevail. But then the prototypes of the *via media* were not only scholars but saints. There may be a lesson lurking there.

(REV.) ROBERT IMBELL

Eros between men

Allston, Mass.

To the Editors: I would like to contest some of the assumptions in Stephen Elred's "Gay Rights/Gay Plight" [December 26, 1986] to which Cardinal Bernardin did not respond in his excellent letter. It is precisely such assumptions as these that continue to go unchallenged both in the homosexual community as well as in Christian journals like *Commonweal*.

The *unspoken* assumption that there is, or should be, unanimity among homosexuals regarding homosexuality is perhaps the greatest and most harmful

myth in all of gay rhetoric. A growing number of homosexuals have come to consider themselves Catholics or Christians *first*, who do not find their true identity in genital orientation nor equate their homosexual desires with their "deepest feelings," as Brother Stephen would have them do, but instead as an impediment to true identity. Although my own desires run deep and strong, I must admit that my conscience's deepest need is truth, my heart's deepest reverence the church, and my soul's deepest longing for Christ. You will find such people as myself in denominational and non-denominational groups like Courage, Regeneration, the Exodus Coalition, and Homosexuals Anonymous.

The second assumption is that it is shameful to feel shame, especially in our shameless age of sexual revolution. What if shame, though, is not the mere result of social or historical repression but something far more intimate to our human, and fallen, nature — the spiritual recognition of a transgression or violation of our createdness? Why indeed

must shame or humiliation necessarily be deemed bad? Is this not what most people feel on the doorstep to true repentance and conversion? Just as fear of the Lord prepares us for love of Him, so shame and humiliation are often what open our hearts to His mercy and to reconciliation. There was a time when to be Christian meant that suffering contributed to the development of character and temptation to the cultivation of virtue, and that to be tested meant one was among the elect. Today we prefer self-gratification, self-acceptance, self-affirmation, in fact those very selves we are told to lose if we are to find ourselves.

Brother Stephen "cannot believe that a loving God would put 10 percent of the population in the bind that [Cardinal Bernardin] propose [s]." One might as well say that one cannot believe a loving God would allow any percentage of His creatures to be born blind, lame, or retarded. "Do you know," he asks, "what it's like to have your identity treated as a 'problem' or a 'weakness'?" There is an infinite difference between human kind-

ness or compassion and God's terrible love, and to forget the utter mysteriousness of His purpose is itself to court blindness, eventually disaster.

Relative to civil rights, what would a nuanced position begin to look like when statistics show that the *least* promiscuous homosexuals leave a lot to be desired as far as temperance goes (e.g., the McKusick study)? What is the public to make of a gay spokesman who derides "safe" sex, claiming death is preferable, or of an AIDS patient asserting on national television his right to continue having sex as well as his right not to inform his partners? Brother Stephen wishes a teacher had been there to help him through his crucial formative years, while I know some whose formative years were crucial because they had teachers who were literally too close for comfort. I might be willing to concede that homosexual activity "is *not* inextricably tied to pederasty, sado-masochism, pornography, promiscuity, or any of the other destructive behaviors which [people] rightly fear," but I would

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be hard put to say the evidence is overwhelming. Until homosexuals can prove that sex rather than personhood is a basis for civil rights, and until they are willing to assume far more responsibility for their actions, I will continue to warn straight society to be wary.

Brother Stephen is convinced that the desires of his heart and loins are "of God" and are morally good; he also says they lack the procreative dimension and are morally neutral. Does he in fact know which they are? However inadvertently, he does touch upon a very significant point here. To my knowledge, no one has more profoundly expressed the beauty of love between men and the naturalness of that desire than Plato, who not only designates it the most divine of madnesses but also allows for and describes intense physical intimacy. However, he does draw the line rather sharply at genital contact. For him eros between men is no less procreative than the love between a man and a woman: the impact of the beloved's exceeding beauty upon the lover renders him "pregnant." But the children that this love breeds are neces-

sarily of the soul rather than the flesh, "a marriage of true minds" with great blessing for the whole society and culture. The church has unfortunately made little or nothing of Plato's sublime insights in this regard, though neither have homosexuals bothered to understand one whom they enlist in their echelon of the famous while neglecting the realism of his idealism, namely, that the sexual consummation of such love is unnatural and that the necessary virtue of chastity draws heroic blood.

Although he alludes to recent biblical scholarship, Brother Stephen does not explain to us how these exegetes reconcile their discoveries with his own admission that "the Church has never condoned homosexual behavior." Myself, I continue to find this scholarship highly debatable; ranging as it does from the disingenuous to the tendentious hardly convinces me, not even when I desperately wanted to be convinced. I do not go in for that "chrono-logical snobbery" which assumes that our quasi-scientific techniques give us better answers, especially in matters spiritual and moral, than those ancients who were more divinely inspired than most moderns could ever dream of being. Exhortations to chastity and purity of heart apply to gays as much as to straights. Christ did make reference to eunuchs (Matt. 19:12); it would seem that those who are eunuchs from birth and those made so by men do not automatically qualify for sanctity, whereas those who become so for the Kingdom of Heaven exemplify decision, conversion, repentance.

I do sincerely hope there will soon come a day when the church will uphold St. Aelred of Rievaulx as the patron saint of homosexuals as well as institute a ritual whereby persons of the same sex can be publicly, perhaps even sacramentally, bound together in a deep, intimate, profound, chaste, spiritual friendship.

PAUL EDWARD GUAY

The author replies:

To paraphrase Thomas More at his execution, I have been commanded to be brief, and brief shall I be.

I agree with Mr. Guay that any sup-

posed unanimity among gay people regarding homosexuality is a harmful myth. In light of this, I question his decision later in the letter to spotlight a gay "spokesman" who would deride "safe sex" on national television. I do not know a single gay person who does not fear the effect of AIDS on himself or on those he loves; to claim that a crackpot, like the one referred to by Mr. Guay, speaks for anyone but himself is insulting.

Contrary to Mr. Guay's impression, I do not believe that it is shameful to feel shame. It is important, however, to distinguish between the salutary effects of moral guilt ("I have done something wrong") and the crippling effects of psychological guilt ("I am a bad person"). While I do not deny that eros has its dark side, I am still convinced that the church's traditional discomfort with sexuality has poisoned the well from which he has been drinking.

At the risk of mixing metaphors, I would like to offer another image: the church has often (especially of late) behaved like an abusive parent toward gay people. Young children caught in a situation are naturally inclined to internalize the abuse; parents are, after all, the basis of identity and security in those formative years. It is imperative, however, that someone eventually explain to them that they have been receiving false messages. I love the Catholic church from the bottom of my heart, but my mother has a problem, and when she becomes like this, I find it necessary to detach with "tough love."

I find Mr. Guay's equation of homosexuality with blindness or retardation to be a comparison of apples and oranges, for the reasons just given.

I am not familiar with the McKusick study which he cites, but I gather that it focuses on the behavior of promiscuous homosexuals. In light of this, I do not understand why he uses it as a basis for sweeping generalizations. Many stable and responsible gay people choose not to participate in these surveys; are they, then, to be tarred with the same wide brush?

With due respect for Plato's contributions to Western culture, I confess that I

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find his insights into sexuality somewhat less than "sublime," resting as they do on a denigration of the physical. I would also disagree with Mr. Guay that the church has made "too little" of Plato's theory; to my mind we have made too much of it. The consciences of God's people would have remained far healthier over the centuries if we had retained the original Hebraic insight into the unity of body and spirit.

Mr. Guay labels recent biblical scholarship "highly debatable," but fails to demonstrate a sound grasp of even the more "conservative" principles of interpretation. No reputable teacher ever finds the answers of the tradition perfectly aligned with the questions of the moment. The charge of "chronological snobbery" which he makes against today's exegetes could be leveled with equal justice against the allegorical interpretations advanced by St. Augustine centuries ago.

I apologize if my brevity has contributed to a tone of waspishness. In a better world, we could all go to a bar and hash things out over a beer.

STEPHEN ELRED

Pretoria & Tel-Aviv

Pierrefonds, Quebec
To the Editors: Thomas M. Ricks's article, "Coming of Age on the West Bank" [December 5], clearly reveals that the Palestinians of those territories are subjected to repressive measures not unlike those imposed upon the blacks of South Africa.

Both can be detained without charge, news reports can be censored, curfews imposed, collective punishment applied, and entire villages sealed off. Also like the blacks of South Africa, the Palestinians of the occupied territories do not have the right to vote; they are an indigenous majority ruled by an armed settler minority and are systematically exploited as a source of cheap labor.

Not surprisingly, this Israel-South Africa analogy (which has even been made by some Israelis) has deeply offended apologists for Israeli policies, who inevitably have countered by hailing Israel as the "only real democracy in the Middle

East." (A fundamental question such as apologists have not seriously considered, however, is how any country that denies the right to vote of almost one-third the population it controls can be described as democratic.) They are also fond of charging with "hypocrisy" especially the Arab states who criticize Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. They cite the "improved living conditions" and the "autonomy plans" for the indigenous population. They praise Israel for being a "strategic Western asset" and bulwark against "Soviet expansionism." They clamor about "terrorists" and "security measures" to justify frequent cross-border raids. They insist that the Palestinian resistance first "renounce violence" and accept the "legitimacy of the state" before being even considered for negotiations.

Not only are the practices and ideologies of Tel-Aviv and Pretoria in many ways similar, but the rhetoric both countries use to defend them rings a suspiciously familiar tune.

JOHN DIRLIK

Backing into reform

Cambridge, Mass.
To the Editors: In the history of the church, it is surely demonstrable that whenever councils asserted themselves, it was a time of decline for the papacy. I have always seen Vatican II as a sign of total papal weakness under pressure from liberals who felt that power entitled them to do anything they saw fit. . . . That reform should have come about some time after World War II (and perhaps considerably earlier), I am willing to agree. Unfortunately, in the sixties, everyone backed into reform, going backwards.

My own personal peeve is that the Catholic church has still never come to terms with either the Renaissance, or what might be called "Man's Coming of Age" in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, exemplified by Descartes, Michelangelo, Newton, Spinoza, etc.

I suggest that man can both be proud of his own achievements and still be a good Christian and a good Catholic.

JEROME MINOT

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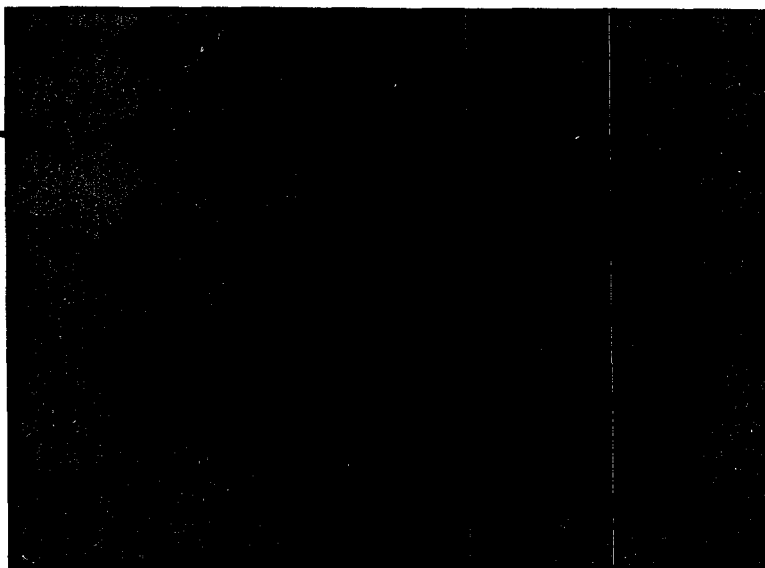
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